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LETTERS TO AN ETON BOY. A SELEC- TION FROM THE CORRE- SPONDENCE, ETC., RECEIVED BY GEORGE BEVERLEY FITZ GRANNET DURING HIS LAST YEAR AT SCHOOL

PREPARED FOR PUBLICATION BY
CHRISTOPHER STONE

AUTHOR OF "LUSUS," "THEY ALSO SERVE," "THE SHOE OF
A HORSE," "THE BURNT HOUSE," ETC.

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DEDICATED
WITHOUT PREJUDICE

TO
E. F. C.
AND
I. R. C.

LETTER-WRITERS

The Honourable Mrs. Fitz Grannet, his mother.

Harcourt Beverley Fitz Grannet, his uncle.

Raymond Fitz Grannet, his cousin.

Miss Lettice Ambrose, daughter of Sir Benjamin Ambrose.

Miss Elsie Henrickson, her cousin.

Mrs. Lely.

Stephen Hepplewhite, Fellow of Prince's College, Oxford.

<i>Hilary Beam</i>	}	Eton Boys.
<i>Richard Roy Drinkwater</i>		

Peter Brade, gardener at Low Orchard.

Miss Betty Broom, daughter of Major Broom.

P. Gurton Richards, M.P.

Note.—The spelling and punctuation of the original documents have been preserved throughout.

LETTERS TO AN ETON BOY

I

From his Mother.

SOUTH STREET, W.

MY darling son, I will do my best to catch the 11 o'clock train, as you suggest; but it is sure to be a rush, and Thompson is being *very* tiresome because I caught her reading my letters yesterday. But I'll tell you all about that on Saturday. Lettice Ambrose is coming here to pick me up. I like her *very* much. We will come *direct* to your room, unless you meet us at the station. I saw your Uncle Harcourt yesterday: he says you asked him down too, but he is not coming. It is just as well. Don't order too much tea for us; you always seem to have such a dreadful amount. I shall not want eggs and bacon or anything like that; and I'm sure Lettice won't either.

Bless you, my dearest boy,

Your devoted

MOTHER.

II

From his Uncle

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

Many thanks indeed for asking me to tea on St. Andrew's Day ; it is an honour which is much appreciated by elderly folk like myself, and if there were not several good reasons for my remaining here I should accept with alacrity. For one thing you know what a cripple I am : journeys demand a great effort, and besides I am very busy just now, and have an appointment that I daren't shirk on Saturday morning, and an old very wise gentleman who wears two pairs of spectacles (and whom you would dislike) coming to stay the week-end with me. Also I saw your Mother yesterday, and heard that *she* is going down to Eton and is taking Miss Ambrose with her ; so I know that I should not be wanted, unless it is in order to look after your Mother. And thirdly—the real reason always comes third—I don't want

to go to Eton and stand in the mud in Sixpenny and meet a number of horrible old men with grey hair and large waistcoats who used to sit next to me in school. I've such a shocking memory for names that these encounters cause me far more discomfort than pleasure: I am in a state of constant dismay and apprehension. This is one of the penalties of not being a man of the world; a recluse like myself prefers to be either with his intimate friends or with entire strangers—if, that is, he cannot be alone. So it is only very rarely that Eton sees me on St. Andrew's Day or on the Fourth of June or for the Winchester Match. To be sure 'we are all in the Old School List,' as Jim Stephen said; and I won't deny that there is an emotion roused by looking through Stapylton's lists and seeing what has happened to this or that fellow who was at my Dame's; but it is an emotion that immediately loses its flavour if you meet the man face to face and find that somehow he is a different kind of bore from yourself. Nominal resurrections are all very well; but bodily—no thank you.

What I really enjoy is the sort of quiet day at Eton that we spent together last

week, when there are no strangers about, nobody but just the ordinary Eton people, the boys, the masters, the dames, the familiar faces in the shops, the whistling errand-boys. While you were in school I wandered about ; School-Yard was empty, except for the pigeons ; the cloisters were full of silence ; the deserted playing-fields seemed to me more wonderful in their autumn foliage than I have ever seen them before. That row of younger elms along Datchet Lane was a sheet of exquisite frail gold, shimmering in the breeze and the sunlight. Please don't think me absurd.

I enjoyed, too, watching you all coming out of school from every direction with books under your arms, as if an ant-heap had been disturbed ; and the masters in cap and gown, with a bundle of papers and a huge key, as they went home to pupil-room or stopped in Long Walk to gossip. And watching the football in South Meadows was good fun, and best of all perhaps the tea in your room and the smell of toast and the sight of you ordering your fags about. All of that was authentic Eton to me, far more so than any impressions I could get on St. Andrew's Day when there is nothing but bustle and eventfulness.

I'm sorry to hear that you still don't hit it off with the captain of the house; and am quite sure, without your telling me so, that it is not your fault, or at any rate not entirely. There need be no friction; but there often is if a house-master does not take trouble to get the most suitable boy for captain. It *can* be done generally, though the highest boy in school order must be captain; it is only a matter of looking ahead for a few years, and that is what the sensible house-master does. As a matter of fact your Tutor spoke to me about it the other day, and spoke, I thought, with very good sense. He counts on the loyalty of you and the other bigger boys to the house as a whole, not to let trifling things upset the harmony. The boy is a Jew of course; good-natured, I suppose, and clever and weak, and a scug. That is the usual type; and there are moments when the temptation to abuse and bully them is strong. But they are a remarkable race, and, as you probably know, there have been very few great men indeed who have not had a strain of Hebrew blood in them. Some of my best friends are Jews; and yet, when I was young, I joined, to my eternal disgrace, in the almost unceasing bullying of a

wretched little boy who was the son of a German Jew and who is now a distinguished Civil Servant, as well as being one of those 'best friends.' So make all the allowances you can for this boy's short-comings; be tolerant without condoning wrong; be loyal to your Tutor and the house; and remember that it is a much finer thing to swallow a grievance than to mutiny.

It is too bad of me to reply to your charming letter by this string of platitudes. But your Father would have said much the same. Only, after the talks that we had in the summer, I want you to feel that you can tell me anything that is on your mind, and I will try to tell you just what is *in* mine. Peter often asks after you, and so does Mrs. Brian whenever I go to the post-office: in fact, everybody in the village seems to have enjoyed making your acquaintance last holidays as much as I did. I shall hear all about St. Andrew's Day no doubt from your Mother: but there's no reason why you shouldn't write and tell me about it yourself. Don't let Miss Ambrose get her feet wet.

Your affectionate

UNCLE.

III

From Miss Lettice Ambrose.

CONDERWOOD HALL.

DEAR GEORGE,

I am writing this as I promised to let you know that I got back safely last night. Your mother was sweet to me and took me across to Waterloo and saw me off in the train. She was awfully kind to me all the time and I enjoyed my day at Eton very much. I thought your room was very nice. I have been trying to tell Father about the Wall Game, but he says it sounds very silly. Now I must stop as it is nearly lunch-time.

Goodbye with love

Yours sincerely

LETTICE AMBROSE.

P.S. I think I must have left my handkerchief in your room, unless I left it in the train. If it turns up will you please send it to me?

IV

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

There's nothing more venomous than family gossip; *parturiunt mures, mons nascitur!* A little tiny remark said in a joke without a shadow of intention to your Mother—and now it reappears as if I had been guilty of a most atrocious piece of bad taste! I am really very angry with your Mother and am writing to tell her so. How could she repeat such things? It's quite true that I did say to her casually, 'I daresay he is short of pocket-money'; but it was because she was wondering why on earth you could have asked me to Eton on the 30th. And now you flare up at me and make me feel dreadfully uncomfortable. I assure you, my dear boy, that I never for an instant *really* thought that you asked me down because you wanted a tip. I think we know each other well enough to dispose of that suspicion. So

please forgive me for having even said such a thing in a joke. I see from your letter that you are really upset about it ; or else I would continue to make a joke of it. There would have been nothing very unnatural in your sentiments if the thought of a possible tip *had* crossed your mind. 'Pouching' is a regular institution, and I'm inclined to think that uncles enjoy it as much as their nephews.

However, think no more about it.

I suppose from the fact that you were able to play in the House Match that your ankle is quite well again. But you do not mention it ; nor Miss Ambrose either. I shall walk over to Conderwood one afternoon and find out what impression Eton made on her. Probably she was more struck by the foolishness of the Wall Match and by the cosiness of your room than by anything else. It is wonderful that of all the things that have been written about Eton there is only one which always sticks in my memory—and probably you have never come across it. It is a sentence in Horace Walpole's letter written from the old Christopher Inn—where the archway leading to the new Pop rooms is—when he was staying there ; he looked across the road and watched a Dame 'over the way,

that has just locked in her boarders, and is going to sit down in a little hot parlour to a very bad supper, so comfortably.' There is always something intimate about a glimpse of people through a window when they are unconscious of your eyes: and if you read Walpole's letter ever you will feel that you not only see the Dame sitting down to her tea but Walpole sitting by the window at the Christopher watching her. There is a special charm about Eton after lock-up; each house is an illuminated hive; as you walk down Keate's Lane you see the windows lit up, and hear boys calling to each other, or the fags running to the cry of 'Lower Boy'; and you catch glimpses of figures here and there, and bits of rooms with 'burries' and sporting pictures with a house-colour cap hung on the corner, and the rules of the House Debating Society framed in ribbon. Those are the sort of things which will strike you as most typical of Eton when you are older. You will forget the hours spent in school and pupil-room; the Chapel Bell will be a more precious memory than any of Chapel itself; even your Tutor will seem in retrospect less important than Matt Wright or your boys' maid.

I'm in a lazy mood as you can see. I have been out in the garden superintending Peter all the afternoon, and he is beginning to take up the turfs with a view to re-laying the tennis lawn; and when I came in to tea I found your letter, and have sat down at once to answer it. You have never seen this room in the winter with fire-light on the book-shelves and the green-shaded lamp on my writing-table. I think you would like it, and I must try to tempt you down here in the holidays. Perhaps Miss Ambrose can help me.

Write and tell me how you get on with your football. Have you a chance of winning the House Cup?

Your affectionate

UNCLE.

V

From his Mother.

SOUTH STREET.

MY DARLING SON,

Your uncle Harcourt is *furious* with me for telling you what he said to me about you wanting a tip ; but I don't think it matters very much, does it ? He is getting rather crochety. He has asked me to let you go to Low Orchard and stay with him after Christmas. Do you want to go ? I can't spare you for long, my dear son, especially just at this dreadful time. We must be together for the 28th ; you are all that I have got left in the world now, and I could not *bear* to spend the day alone. But afterwards if you want to go to your Uncle Harcourt for a week, I will arrange it ; you will enjoy yourself more in the country, and I feel how bored you are in the flat. Of course after the 28th I could go to theatres with you. Think it over and tell me exactly what you would *like* to do.

I am all on edge today: yesterday I was at the dress-maker all the afternoon choosing dresses for when I go out of mourning, and now I am thoroughly done up and have had breakfast in bed. Everybody seems to conspire to worry me and I am having trouble with all the servants. Lady de Bluhn has almost persuaded me to join her at Beaulieu later on; she has a villa there and rest is what I really want. But I shan't go anyhow till after your holidays. Somehow I never realized that the De Bluhn boy was captain of your house; you never tell me things. If you are clever you will make great friends with him. They have a lovely shoot. If he is anything like his Mother, he can't be a beauty; you must introduce him to me the next time I come down to Eton.

My head is aching dreadfully, so I must stop writing. *Do* be careful of yourself, my dear son, and run no risks with that weak ankle. I'm sure you ought not to be allowed to play football at all. Write to me about the holidays.

Your devoted
MOTHER.

VI

From his Mother.

SOUTH STREET.

MY DARLING SON,

Of course I quite understand that you would like to stay with your Uncle Harcourt for a bit of the holidays; it is sweet of you to want to be with me, and I should dearly love to have you always, but I simply can't stay at Low Orchard again. I was so dreadfully uncomfortable when your dear Father and I went there three years ago and he made me promise never to risk my health again, so I dare not. No, you shall come here for Christmas and on about the tenth of January you shall go to Low Orchard and from there straight back to Eton. As a matter of fact this will suit me very well as Lady de Bluhn wants me to stay with her from the 12th at Beaulieu and I shall go on afterwards and join the Hoileys at Monte Carlo. I don't like the way you speak of the De Bluhn

boy very much. He *may* be all you say ; but he must be much cleverer than you as he is captain of the house, and it is silly to despise him simply because he is a Jew. Everybody is nowadays, and you will never get on in this world if you take up a superior attitude towards them. Lady de Bluhn has been very kind to me in a great many ways and I want you to be friends with her boy for *my* sake. There's no knowing what old Sir Judas might do for you later on.

Your devoted

MOTHER.

VII

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

I am delighted to hear that you are going to honour us with a visit, and you should have seen Mrs. Brian's face when I told her just now. It is much better that you should be with your Mother on the first anniversary of your Father's death, and you will be a great comfort to her. Indeed I think it is very good of her to let me have you here at all, considering how little she sees of you and how little else she has to care about; but the sooner she gets out of this vile climate the better and when you have seen her off to the Riviera you can come down here and we will have some jolly long talks. I'm afraid there will be little enough to amuse you especially as the fair Miss Lettice will be abroad, as you probably know; but Sir Benjamin has promised to give you some mounts. I was

at Conderwood yesterday afternoon—a delightful walk through the plantations to the home farm, and so round by the shrubbery. Lady Ambrose says she will arrange for you to go to a dance or two, if you care for such things. The Hatherleigh boy will be home from Winchester. I gather that Miss Lettice enjoyed her day at Eton very much, though it was not easy to get her to talk about it. She is an exceptionally nice girl, because she is quite unconscious of the fact that she is far more intelligent than most girls of her age. I found myself discussing all manner of curious things with her that I'm sure you know nothing about—Masefield and Post Impressionism and even anthropology! Lady Ambrose is evidently liberal-minded in her views on education; but I dare not think what the Squire would have said if he had overheard the conversation.

I am very sorry to hear that you have been knocked out of the House Cup in the second round, because I know that you feel it a good deal; and I suppose it will deprive you of the pleasure of distributing the house-colours broad-cast. How difficult it is for veterans like me to recall the ardours and

agonies of those early ambitions! They were very real at the time, no doubt, though I do not suppose I was ever quite so keen on games as most boys are. It was a family joke, as you probably know, that your Father, who was of course my 'minor,' gave me my house-colours. I remember his doing it very vividly, just after prayers—which I had been reading in my dame's absence—as I was leaving pupil room. 'I say, Major, you may wear your house-colours.' Perhaps it doesn't sound quite so absurd to you as it does to me, now that I look back on it; and still more absurd my thrill of pride which I suppose I attempted to conceal in my nonchalant 'Thanks awfully.' The nonchalance grows with age, but I get no more thrills like those. It was typical of the fineness of your Father's character that he never let me feel the humiliation of being a scug while he was captain of the games and in Pop. It is a sort of humiliation which is probably very good for us, and I ought to have been conscious of it; but on the whole I was happy enough in the enjoyment of *his* successes. I am very glad that you are captain of the games in your house too; there is a pleasant sentiment about doing

what your Father did before you. I wish you were in Pop as well and had got your Eleven. But that may come in good time. It is a little difficult for you being in a house that is not very good at games: you have no rivals at hand to set you high standards and urge you on; and I expect your tendency is to become rather a despot instead of being *primus inter pares*. But you must see to it that you leave a good tradition in the house, so that in three or four years when your fags are playing for the house and you are an undergraduate they may hold your name in respect and welcome you down to a house-game with a certain amount of awe! I always think that one of the best things about the organization of games at Eton, and especially in recent years, is that house patriotism is encouraged among the younger boys, in junior matches, the lower boy cup, junior house fours and so on; and then later on wider horizons are revealed by school games, so that in cricket and rowing at any rate you mix with boys from other houses and forget inter-house rivalries for the time being. There is no need to be bigoted in your patriotism whether it is for your house or your school or

your country. I detest the arrogance of 'My country, right or wrong': that is woman's patriotism; but I love the view of 'My country, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness or in health.' There's not much difference in the attitude, I know; but it is a difference that seems very important to me. Do you know De Musset's phrase '*Mon verre n'est pas grand, mais je bois dans mon verre*'? or to put it in English, 'my house isn't up to much, but still—it's my house.'

Somehow I seem to drift into preaching whenever I write to you! Adieu.

Your affectionate Uncle,

H. B. F.

VIII

From Miss Lettice Ambrose.

CONDERWOOD.

DEAR GEORGE,

Thank you for your letter. Yes, I 'really am' going to Switzerland. I persuaded Mother to let me go with some cousins who invited me: they go every year and *love* it. I am so excited about it. It would be great fun if you could come too, instead of staying at Low Orchard: but I suppose your plans are made. Mr. Fitz Grannet was up here the other day and told us about your coming to stay with him. He seemed to imagine that the news would interest *me*!! I like him very much, but he is awfully clever and terrifies me; he will talk about people and things that I've never even heard of. It's a pity he doesn't get married. He seems to be quite fond of you—which is funny. I am going up to London next Thursday for shopping; but I suppose you won't be there. You sound

very depressed in your letter ; that quotation from De Musset is a favourite of Mother's. Goodbye.

LETTICE AMBROSE.

It is a place called Sonchaud that we are going to in Switzerland.

IX

From his Mother.

SOUTH STREET.

MY DARLING SON,

What an extraordinary child you are! No sooner do I make all my plans for your holidays than you want to change them entirely. I can't think why you suddenly want to go to Switzerland, but I suppose all your friends are going and you don't want to be outdone. I will see what can be done, but I wish you had let me know earlier; it is a little inconsiderate of you, my dear, and you *know* I do everything in my power to make you happy, so you ought to consider me *a little*. I can't *possibly* go before Christmas, because I want to be with you *here* for the 28th. After that we will go, if I can get rooms anywhere; and I shall have to try and find someone to look after you when I have gone to Beaulieu. I have heard of Sonchaud; everybody is going there this year, and we

shall be very lucky if we can get any rooms at all. Lord Twisley was there last year and had to sleep in a bathroom for two nights, I'll write at once. It will be great fun if we *do* go, only I wish I had thought of it earlier. I shall have to get a lot more clothes; of course all my new things are for the Riviera. There's one good thing I can go straight on to Beaulieu from Sonchaud; and you will have to come back alone, but you won't mind that, will you? The Shooters will be there, I expect: and we shall find plenty of people that I know.

What a nuisance about your teeth; or is it only an excuse for an afternoon in town? I have just telephoned to Dr. Barton and made an appointment for 2.45, as you said; so I will write to your tutor and ask him to let you come up for luncheon on Thursday. Where would you like to lunch? You must be very good and go back to Eton *directly* after the dentist. But I shall love seeing you again: and I am *really* glad that you want to go to Switzerland with me instead of staying at Low Orchard with your Uncle.

Your devoted

MOTHER.

X

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

Naturally I am disappointed, but I quite understand that you think you ought to spend the holidays with your Mother and that she needs bracing air. It is a brilliant idea taking her to Switzerland and I daresay that in the intervals of looking after her you will be able to derive some slight enjoyment from the various forms of sport in vogue round those snow-bound shanties which they call Palaces or Grand Hotels. I quite appreciate your unselfishness in giving up the visit to me to which you say you were looking forward so eagerly ; and I am sure that your Mother is fully alive to the wave of devotion which impels you to sacrifice your pleasure to her companionship. It is an extraordinary coincidence that she should have selected Sonchaud for her nerve-cure, as I understand

that a near neighbour of mine, a Miss Ambrose, is going to the same place. You may come across her.

Your affectionate Uncle

H. B. F.

XI

From his Mother.

SOUTH STREET.

DARLING, no time for a proper letter. I must dress for dinner. I have written to ask Lettice Ambrose to luncheon tomorrow, but I don't know whether she will be able to come. I was wondering why you wanted dentist's leave; but I knew you had some object in your artful mind! The car will meet you at Paddington. Bless you.

MOTHER.

XII

From his Mother.

SOUTH STREET.

MY DEAREST SON,

I am dreadfully worried and must write to you *at once* to tell you how sad you have made me. Lady de Bluhn has been here this afternoon, and she has shown me a letter from her boy, all about the *horrible* way the other boys treat him. The poor woman was crying so. I can hardly believe that boys should be such *brutes*; and it cuts me to the heart to think that *my* boy was one of them. Eric de Bluhn does not mention you by name, but I know enough to know that even if you did not actually help to wreck his room and burn all his books you must have acquiesced in it; and that is just as bad, if not worse. He says that all the older boys have made a dead set at him all this half, and have tried to make him ridiculous in front of the lower boys; and his life had been quite unbearable in consequence. And on

Thursday, after you had been so sweet and loving to me here, and had enjoyed yourself with Lettice, you must have gone straight back and allowed those wretches to attack the unfortunate boy just because he is a Jew. I pray you may not have had a hand in the business. But oh George, do think for a moment what I must have felt with his poor Mother sitting by me and crying, knowing as I did that my own son was responsible *very largely*. And I am so proud of you generally, and have always wanted you to be *finer and better* than other men, never to do a dirty action or anything dishonourable or unkind. And *you* have made me glad for once that your Father is not alive. I do not know what he would have said. It is all *too* dreadful to me. I don't know what to say or do. I am writing to your Uncle Harcourt.

Write and tell me, my darling son, that you are sorry for the harm you have done, I am sure thoughtlessly.

Your worried

MOTHER.

XIII

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

I was hoping that I should hear from you before I had to answer the letter which I received from your Mother yesterday; and yours, which has just arrived, has certainly cleared the air a bit. In the first place you make no effort to repudiate your responsibility in the ragging of the young Doubloon; in the second you are evidently surprised by your Mother's distress; in the third, your Tutor has given you and the rest 'a proper jaw' and has relieved me of the necessity for emphasizing the pedagogic point of view. But since there has been a crisis of a sort you want me to tell you what I think about the whole matter; and you rather unkindly remind me that in one of my letters I told you that when I was your age I also was in the habit of bullying Jews! That is not quite accurate; it was at my private school,

and I was not the ringleader. There were seven of us in a dormitory, and one of us was a Jew who, as I think I told you, is now one of my great friends ; but at that period of his life he certainly did not come up to even schoolboy standards of cleanliness and he was an abominable little sneak. We bullied him in various ways, some of them brutal, and though I must confess that he and I have often laughed over the thing since, I have never been able to regard it with anything but remorse.

With you it is a little different. You are six years older than I was, and cannot plead the same degree of thoughtlessness. You are in a position of responsibility in the house. When you first went to your Tutor's, the house was in a flourishing condition ; you had as a fagmaster a boy of whom I have never heard anything but good spoken—the Keeper of the Field and President of Pop. You were brought up to excellent traditions. At the end of last summer a large number of boys at your Tutor's left ; and you yourself told me last holidays when you stayed here that every single boy who was of any value or character in the house had gone. You were suddenly promoted from

being a comparative nonentity in Middle Division to being Captain of the Games and in First Hundred. Similarly this boy De Bluhn who had been an insignificant scug in First Hundred suddenly found himself Captain of the House and in Sixth Form. There is a group of boys of the ordinary Lower and Middle Fifth Form type, and a crowd of new boys: no end of fags, no end of chances for 'side,' no end of petty temptations to slack, to swagger and to bully. It was more than ordinarily important that you and De Bluhn should see eye to eye and should co-operate in setting a good example and helping your Tutor. But what happens? There is endless friction. 'The Library' makes a dead set at the unfortunate De Bluhn. Boys of sixteen and seventeen rag and defy him, and what is worse encourage the lower boys and new boys to do the same. The position was intolerable.

You will remember writing to me about it at the beginning of the half. We discussed it that afternoon at Eton; your Tutor spoke to me about it; I wrote to you specifically on that point, begging you to show good sense, forbearance, loyalty. All no good.

You go up to town on a frivolous pretext, have a delightful afternoon with your Mother and Miss Ambrose, and then when you get back, it is lock-up; the smell of hot baths and hot teas; blazers and scarves and corduroy slippers; a long evening and nothing to do. 'Let's go and rag old Bluhn.' Off you go in a crowd, a few excited lower boys following at a distance. The unfortunate Bluhn is pegging away at 'Trial sap'; he is tired, impatient, 'ratty,' and when you see that he is in a nasty temper *you* get nasty too and pull away his chair or push all his books on to the floor; he scrambles up and hits someone. There is a general hullabaloo. 'You would, would you? Heave his rotten books in the fire, the dirty sap,' and so on and so forth; and till it is all over and the mischief is done, you none of you realize that a crowd of lower boys has been peering through the door at the indignities of the Captain of the house.

Isn't that about it? I fill in the blanks from the short account that you give me.

Well, of course, it is all rather disgraceful. You could so easily have stopped the whole thing. It is obvious that you are an irresponsible creature, too intent on gratifying the instincts of the moment to think of others,

your Tutor, the honour of the house, your Mother—even the victim himself. And it is part of the irresponsibility that you ‘don’t see why Mother is making such a fuss about it,’ and after all it isn’t the first time a chap has been ragged at Eton ; and your Tutor gave you a proper jaw and De Bluhn was ‘awfully decent’ afterwards and you’ve quite made it up and are good friends. In a sense that ends the matter, and it is possible that the crisis has finally abolished the daily friction under which I know you were chafing. But I sincerely hope that you don’t feel *quite* so well satisfied with yourself as you did before.

This is a longer letter than you bargained for, but I’ve got one or two more things to say and you may as well hear them at once. The first one is that I entirely sympathize with your Mother. She has been through a lot of trouble during the last few years, and the mainstay of her happiness has been the knowledge that you were getting on so well at Eton and that people liked you and that you promised to be a worthy son of your Father. You laughed—and so did I—at her exalted notion of what being Captain of the Games meant ; but I expect you felt just as much as I did what a very wonderful and

precious thing this mother's pride is. She glories in everything which is to your credit; she must be equally abased by anything which discredits you. That is woman's love. And then too you must remember that this trouble was brought home to her in a peculiar way because Lady de Bluhn is her friend and came straight to her for help and comfort. You will not quite understand till you are much older how jealously your Mother—and she is not the only one of your relations—guards every moment of your school-life, how anxiously she listens for good or bad report. Imagine for an instant what she would have said and done if *you* had been the 'ragged rascal.'

The second point, my dear George, is that I entirely sympathize with *you* too. I know perfectly well that you are not a bully, and I believe you absolutely when you say that the incident had nothing to do with the fact that De Bluhn is a Hebrew. I know how *very* objectionable the scug-sap can be, especially when he has a sharp tongue and a mean nature; and I take your word for it that you wouldn't have allowed him to be ragged unless he deserved it pretty thoroughly. You boys have standards of your own, and I have

the greatest respect for them; nor can anything which you do shake my confidence in your good sense. Only you mustn't allow De Bluhn to pay the piper; the essence of buying experience is to pay your fair share of the cost.

Forgive this letter, which after all is suspiciously like a pi-jaw. But solitary people like me have much leisure for meditating upon things which are mere incidents in busier lives: and I've been chewing the cud ever since I got your Mother's letter two days ago. Write and reassure me that I have not tried your patience.

Ever your affectionate

UNCLE.

XIV

From Miss Lettice Ambrose.

CONDERWOOD.

DEAR GEORGE,

It would be ripping if you could work it so as to come out to Sonchaud *before* Christmas. I believe it is great fun out there—everything English, only proper snow and ice. We start on the 21st, and our berths have been taken for weeks; there is a tremendous rush just then and I doubt if you could get any so late as this. Your Mother was *wavering* on Thursday, wasn't she? I hope she will give in. It was jolly seeing you, but I'm afraid you didn't have much time at the dentist. I only got half my shopping done and only *just* caught the 6.30. I'll have to go up again. I met your Uncle in the village this morning, and he said you had been getting into hot water, but he wouldn't tell me what sort. I haven't got any photographs of myself. I haven't been

taken for ages: and anyhow I don't think I would send you one.

Yours etc.

LETTICE A.

You remember Angela? She had pups last night. Shall I keep one for you?

XV

From his Mother.

SOUTH STREET.

MY DARLING BOY,

Your letter came by the same post as one from your Tutor and another from your Uncle Harcourt. I am very thankful to hear that you have behaved properly and have apologised to Eric de B. I do not suppose that it was easy to do, but it would not be like my boy to shirk any duty because it was hard. Your Tutor and your Uncle both wrote very foolishly; they are *so* narrow-minded. It's no wonder your Tutor has such a bad house; he seems to have no gumption at all. Of course, I quite forgive you, my darling; it was only that I was so *hurt* to think that you have put yourself in a false position. Lady de Bluhn is *charming* about it all, and most sensible; and she wants me to bring you to Beaulieu with me when I go. Would you like it? They have a most beautiful villa, right in the bay; it's

quite famous. And you would have plenty to do for a week or ten days. No doubt they would motor you about. Do you think you could stand being with Eric? Then you could both travel home together. I would much rather you did that than stayed on at Sonchaud after I have left. I can't start till after the 28th: it is no use asking me. I am dreading Christmas enough as it is. Much love from your devoted

MOTHER.

XVI

From his Mother.

SOUTH STREET.

MY DARLING BOY,

Fancy you getting in 'Pop' and never telling me a word about it beforehand! Your telegram was a complete surprise to me. How proud you make me when you do these things, and how proud your dear Father would have been! It is a *great* distinction, isn't it? I know he was in it, and he always kept the rules framed in light blue ribbon; I have still got them stored away somewhere, but I suppose you will want to have some of your own. You will wear proper stick-up collars now, won't you, instead of those turn-down ones that are so unbecoming and show all your neck. And I shall love thinking of you wearing the silk waistcoat I made for you last year. You will be glad to hear that *we are going to Sonchaud before Christmas!!* I thought it all over and came to the conclusion that

really I shall feel less miserable if I get *right away* from all associations for the 28th; and anyhow I shall have you with me, which is all I want to make me happy. Besides I shan't have to give so many Christmas presents if I am not in England. I have written to the chairman of the railway company who is an old friend of mine and I know he will see that we get sleeping-berths in the train; and I have wired to the hotel. We'll start on the 23rd. What fun it will be—just you and me! I am quite excited; and you mustn't devote yourself *entirely* to Lettice, though I am very fond of her and quite like you being fond of her too!! You are, aren't you? I have talked to Lady de Bluhn on the telephone and she is delighted that you are going to Beaulieu with me on the 12th; we can get there by Geneva, I'm told. What about clothes? You must have a nice suit, *grey*, I think, and white flannels. I expect your shooting clothes will do for Sonchaud; but you must remember that it is very cold there and very hot at Beaulieu; and you can't get anything out there, so you must order *at once*. Insist on Walls making the suit *immediately*. I shall see you on Thursday, shan't I? I hope you are doing

well in Trials, and haven't had your head turned by getting into Pop. My darling, I *am* proud of you.

With fond love

Your devoted

MOTHER.

XVII

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

What a very amazing couple you are—you and your Mother. It almost makes me giddy to *watch* your antics and somersaults; but what it must be like to be one of the acrobats I cannot conceive. One day you are coming to stay with me: the next you are not—you are going to Switzerland: the next you treat another boy outrageously: the next you are going to stay with him in the holidays: the next you are going to Switzerland *before* Christmas; and now you have been elected to Pop! It is very bewildering. I shall not be surprised if you write to announce that you have got a distinction in Trials, have bought a motor car and are going to be married on Christmas Eve.

So you are really off to Sonchaud this week? Perhaps it is just as well. The brisk air up there will prevent your Mother from growing over-melancholy—she has been

inclined to let the anniversary get on her nerves beforehand—and you will certainly enjoy yourself more out there than in England: and the glimpse of the Riviera that you will get in January will make an impression on you, unless I'm mistaken, that you will not soon forget. The only thing I ask of you, in reparation for the shocking way in which you have treated me, is that you should let me hear now and then how things strike you.

I'm afraid it is not altogether a good sign when you write long letters on Trials paper; but it is hereditary. Your Father hardly ever wrote any letters when he was at Eton except during Trials; all his arrears of correspondence were wiped off while other folk were polishing their Latin Proses or verifying their arithmetical problems by algebra, and in some mysterious way he nearly always escaped a plough. I hope you will, too; but these lightning changes of plans for the holidays, and the excitement of the Pop Election will have tested the balance of your mind. I can tell you now how much disappointed I was that you were not elected at the end of the summer half: but in some ways it is more of a distinction to be elected

in a bye-term when there are only one or two vacancies. It is a fine bit of irony if, as you seem to think, your success is partly due to public approval of your behaviour in the De Bluhn episode. And as you also undoubtedly owe your invitation to the Villa Bluhn—or whatever it is called—at Beau-lieu to the same source, I am afraid you are likely to draw a very wrong moral from the incident! But don't forget that your responsibilities are enormously increased by your new privileges.

Well, good-bye and bon voyage. I shall think of you on Christmas Day. Find time to write to me.

Your affectionate Uncle

H. B. F.

XVIII

From Miss Lettice Ambrose.

GROSVENOR HOTEL.

DEAR GEORGE,

Hurrah! How clever you are, and how lucky to have a Mother who does just exactly everything you ask! I shall meet the train on Sunday morning at Sonchaud. We start tomorrow. I have only just arrived with Mother, who is going to see me off. You will like my cousins. Madge, the eldest, is rather a frump, but Elsie is a topper. I believe she skates divinely. You will have to teach *me*! Mother has given me a lovely pair of skates and boots. I expect I'll fall about a lot at first. I don't know what Pop is, unless it's a drink; but I'm glad you have got into it, if *you* are as you seem to be. You must tell me all about it when we meet. I'm sure I don't remember ending one of my letters 'with love'; it must have been a slip, because I am of course only

Yours sincerely.

LETTICE AMBROSE.

So there.

XIX

From his Mother.

SOUTH STREET.

DEAREST BOY,

I enclose a cheque for £3 but you must really make that do. Surely you needn't tip everyone because you have got into Pop. I have been packing all day and am tired out: Thompson is so stupid, she muddles everything and I had to *re-pack* three of my trunks. Is your Panama Hat here? You will want it at Beaulieu, and your tennis shoes and racquet. I am distracted by all the things I have to remember. The tickets have come and everything is fixed up, thank goodness. I do hope it will be fine on Saturday. I am dreading the crossing.

Your devoted

MOTHER.

XX

From Mr. Richard Roy Drinkwater.

DEAR FIDGE,

I didn't know you were going after reading-over, why didn't you say so? Trabs says you didn't know yourself till lunch time. I suppose you are in Switzerland by now having no end of a time. I suppose you know you only passed by 4 marks. I asked the Vulture. I passed by over 20, jolly good, it was through fagging Stewart to read me cribs all Sunday. I shirked reading-over and went to the farm with Trabs; it was jolly rotten, we ratted most of the time but the ferrets wouldn't work. We got back about 5 and passed those girls we saw that Sunday on the terrace: they looked jolly decent but they were bycycling. Of course the Vulture made a fuss because we were late. I am going to hunt tomorrow. Its an awful bore there is a kids party here on Saturday and I have got to be Father Christmas. My aunt has asked me up to

London for the last week of the holidays, will you be there? We might have a rag. Good luck for Christmas and the New Year. Be good.

Yours

BEETLE.

XXI

From Mr. Hilary Beam.

PRINCES GATE.

DEAR FIDGE,

It's rather fun up here though the shops are beastly full. My mater is going to let me skate at Princes after Christmas. Is it true you are going to stay with Bluhn's people? Beetle told me. You are a rum chap. I shall address this to South Street. I hope it will find you. Merry Christmas.

Yours to an ash

TRABS.

XXII

From his cousin, Raymond Fitz Grannet.

BUFFALOES CLUB.

GOD bless my soul, George, you don't mean to tell me that those blithering idiots have gone and elected you to Pop! I suppose they had run out of black balls or lost them in the wash or something. I'd have come to see you and Aunt Lou off yesterday if I hadn't been in the City—by Gad, yes sir, the City. I wanted to see your cherubic countenance before it gets frost-bitten. I suppose you are dreadfully filbertian nowadays; you'd better cut off your head if it is swelling too fast and sew a button on instead. Mind the girls out there; their hearts are warm though their hands are cold, I believe. It's the dancing in the evenings that does all the mischief, isn't it? and *those who know* tell me that at Sonchaud there is a room at the back of the stage—I don't know *what* stage—when Neaera's hair (if it's possible to get near her) soon gets tangled. But of

course you don't read Burns. Let me hear if I am rightly informed. Aunt Lou told me that you were going to Beaulieu later on. We *may* meet, if the world of finance can spare me for ten days. Not a word to Aunt Lou: if I go I shall be incog. Ha ha. Chin chin.

Yours Yulishly

RAYMOND.

XXIII

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD,
Christmas Day.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

I hope your Mother has got my letter with all my Christmas wishes for her and you. She will have handed you the pair of links which she assured me you badly needed, and which I entrusted to her care; but I have also a couple of books for you which await your return to England. I had a surprise visit from your Tutor yesterday: he bicycled over from Shoreleigh, where he is spending Christmas, and I was able to persuade him to stay the night; in fact he has only just left me. As you can imagine, we found time to discuss you at some length, and the Christmas chimes startled us in the middle of our talk. I threw open the window and we listened to the choir singing 'Nowell' in the church tower: it came very clearly through the keen air and struck the heart

with a strange pang, which may have been partly due to the open window. Your Tutor was deeply moved, but I'm afraid I was wondering how many hours' sleep those unfortunate boys would get. The Vicar, good soul, spares no one when he can get an emotional effect.

It will probably surprise you to hear that your Tutor is capable of being *moved* by anything at all. But as a matter of fact that lean-faced, hawk-like type of man is far more sensitive than the pink and dreamy sentimentalist. I have known him for thirty years and more, though I was never his friend in the degree that your Father was. They were inseparable at Eton and at Oxford; and, oddly enough, I can remember quite well in the library at home, when your Tutor was staying with us in the vacation, how we discussed whether he should be a schoolmaster; and your Father urged him to go and be a beak at Eton, so that he could be *your* Tutor! But of course that was long before even your Mother had come on the scene. I reminded your Tutor of it last night and he remembered the scene well. He has promised to show me the letter which your Father

wrote to him at the beginning of your first half, and he *did* show me the letter which he has just written to your Mother with your reports. It may irritate you and make you think that he does not understand you; but you will be wrong. What you have to remember is that a master, especially at Eton, comes across an enormous number of boys in twenty years, and by the time that he gets a house he has had a good deal of experience of the way in which his earlier pupils have developed. His chief responsibility lies not in making life as happy and easy as possible for boys while they are in his charge, but in looking far ahead and fitting them by vigorous training to be capable of making their own lives happy afterwards. He has his own idea of what happiness is, of course; but the Eton ideals and standards are pretty well fixed by this time: and I am glad to say that most Eton masters are old fashioned enough to believe in discipline still. These standards are not by any means high, and a Tutor has a right to demand of his pupils that they should rise to them. There are only two things for which he naturally makes allowances—bad health and a bad home-influence. In

your case there is no need to make any allowances at all. You are as strong as an ox and your Tutor knows very well the sort of home that you come from. Perhaps it is natural that he should raise the standards a peg or two for you: that he should expect and require more of you; but you may depend upon it that when he says, as he said to me and as he almost says to your Mother, 'I am not entirely satisfied with the way George is shaping,' he has very good reason for being uneasy. I should not be writing this to you if I did not disagree with him, or at least I should not express myself quite so frankly. His reasons are good in themselves, but in my opinion they are not justified. He says that you are too hard and cynical and worldly; that you know the price of everything and the value of nothing, as the saying goes; that you are irresponsible, frivolous and shallow; that, in short, you are an ordinary Eton boy. I tell you this because you know as well as I know that you have given your Tutor very good reason to think as he does. But, unless I'm very much mistaken you are rather different now; and that is why it is better to talk the matter over and

admit things and make resolutions. If I had written to you like this six months ago, you would probably have written me a curt, sullen, defiant answer. But I have no fear of that now. You are far too sensible, as I know well enough; and I ventured to tell your Tutor so last night. I must admit that you ought to have done better in Trials; but they are not a test and you had so many distractions—the constant change of plans for the holidays, the Pop election in the middle, the prospect of Switzerland and all its excitements, not to mention the De Bluhn affair—that it would have been almost a triumph if you had done well.

You see I am in a grouching argumentative mood, partly no doubt because I had to get up at an unearthly hour to give your Tutor breakfast; and then I went to church and was annoyed by the Vicar; and the whole atmosphere of Christmas is very trying for a lonely bachelor because it is impossible to be quite unconscious of it. Peter is very much delighted by the picture postcard that you sent him, and I should think everyone in the village has had a look at it. Mrs. Brian has been in bed

with her rheumatics, poor soul; but she was in church this morning.

If you come across a man called Barclay Tennant at Sonchaud, make friends with him. We were in Sixth Form together; he was a tug. He is the very best type of Eton waster. My love to your Mother. Try to distract her thoughts as much as possible.

Your affectionate Uncle

H. B. F.

XXIV

From Peter, Gardener at Low Orchard.

MR. GEORGE

MY DEAR

Sir Many thanks for picter card. received also your kind greetings For Xmas and the New Year. It looks a fine Place wher you are. Dear Mr. George its a pity you didnt take Master with you he is sad. it seems almost ages since I Last saw you here in Aug. Wishing the Best Complimits of the Season To yourself and Mrs. Fitz Grannet.

I am your Obedient

Servant

P. BRADE.

XXV

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

You really are a most amiable and generous person. You not only thank me for having written you a long and dyspeptic letter, but you have evidently gone to the trouble of reading it : and the only caustic comment which you allow yourself to make is that your Tutor generally has a depressing effect on people. He is one of the best fellows and most conscientious schoolmasters in the world, and I have the utmost respect for him ; but it is not to be denied that I find his groovishness a little irksome because it takes the form of judging everybody by school standards ; and in his company I have that dreadful shabby feeling that also paralyses me in the presence of my tailor. Do you know what I mean ? Some criticism spoken or unspoken, is bracing and tonic ; but it may equally well be depressant, as

the chemists say, unless the critic is a man with a vivid personality, or, I may add from hearsay, a woman who is in love with you. Anyhow I have quite recovered from Christmas fever, and your charming letter has given the fillip to my convalescence.

I am sending you the pocket Stevenson which I had meant to keep for your return. I was looking through it last night, and it seemed to me so wholly admirable and so likely to fit in with your moods that you may as well have it at once. You are fond of his books, I know, though you can't read the Scotch novels; and I have a keen recollection of your delight in the *Apology for Idlers* when you read it here last summer; so I am sure you will agree with me that these selections have been most cleverly made and that every sentence is a genuinely *tonic* commentary on life. 'Gentleness and cheerfulness, these come before all morality; they are the perfect duties,' p. 120, all that passage is golden. 'There are two things we should never weary of—goodness and humility.' 'Practice is a more intricate and desperate business than the toughest theorising: life is an affair of cavalry, where rapid judgment and prompt action are alone possible and right.'

How finely he phrases what has no doubt been expressed hundreds of times in dead words. I wish I had a tenth of the man's courage and vitality ; I have certainly not a tenth of the trouble he had to bear. At any rate I am not exiled, as he was.

The account of your amusements is most entertaining ; I should much enjoy to watch you dragging your Mother and Miss Lettice round the rink. Some other year, if you go out there again, I must make an effort to uproot myself and join you ; but travelling is not much in my line nowadays, and even the exertion of going to Eton for the day takes its toll from my miserable body. Your Mother tells me that you are a great favourite, which you forgot to mention in your own letter ; and she is evidently bursting with pride, though a little anxious that you may not be spoiled by too much attention. She need have no such anxieties. Men and women who have been spoilt when they were young nearly always turn out well. It's an odd fact and shows that some of our well-worn traditions should be scrapped. The same fathers that believe in making their sons rough it and in teaching them a proper humility by neglect are just

the men who will lavish the most absurd care upon a prize short-horn or a race-horse. Of course I don't recommend molly-coddling to the point of effeminacy ; but I mean that encouragement, affectionate encouragement, is the very best way of helping young people to develop their faculties : and, to take an obvious instance, you will feel ever so much surer of yourself now that you are in Pop, and will find somehow that you have got a better grip on things.

You see, I write to you just as if we were both concerned about the future of one George Fitz Grannet, and were laying our heads together to help him. Why shouldn't we ? We human beings have the odd gift of taking an impersonal view of ourselves ; just as when you were a child, you used to say ' George wants this ' or ' George doesn't like that,' so now you can say, ' This isn't good for George ' or ' George ought to do that,' and we can sit in conclave upon your own education.

Sitting in my library here I have very much better opportunities for writing than you have in your whirl of excitements ; but your abrupt postscript, ' Why should one aim at being happy ? ' has rather bewildered me.

You throw it to me as you throw a bone to a dog, to keep him quiet, n'est-ce pas? Is it because I said something in my last letter about training boys so that they may make their lives happy? I am not going to be drawn, and I shall certainly miss the post if I start explaining. You know quite well what I *meant*. Vide R.L.S. again, 'There is no duty we so much under-rate as the duty of being happy.'

Give my love to your Mother, and tell Miss Lettice that the church here was *vilely* decorated for Christmas and it is all her fault.

Yours affectionately

H. B. F.

XXVI

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

Our letters crossed; and while I was carefully avoiding any mention of your Father you were writing to ask me questions about him. My reticence on the subject was due to my feeling that it is not a good thing to associate particular days with sad events which happened in previous years: the habit grows if encouraged, and in your case it would mean that every Christmas would be a time of great melancholy for your Mother and you. It will be hard enough anyhow to rid our memories of those painful associations without artificially deepening them. I say painful because of the shock that came with your dear Father's accident, the nightmare of getting doctors and so on at such a time, the great suffering that he bore so magnificently for five days, and the strain that it all put upon your Mother. A

beautiful and peaceful death is a thing upon which one can afford to look back constantly and with a certain elation; but this was such an outrage upon life itself, so to speak, that I would pray that the memory of it might be blurred and indistinct.

Of the fineness of his life it is a joy to think, and in all those letters that your Mother received there was not, I think, a word of exaggeration or insincerity; they just proved that a noble life not lived in the public eye may yet leave its mark over an astonishingly wide sphere of influence. Very appropriate to him was a saying of Edmund Garrett, whom he knew and admired and lamented in his early death. 'The only way to get things done in this world,' said Garrett, 'is not to mind who gets the credit for doing them.' Your Father was always 'getting things done' on these terms; and I can think of no one of my generation who had or has a wider enthusiasm for reforms of all sorts and who has striven for the realization of his schemes with more energy and unselfishness. The great thing is that you should be inspired and not oppressed by the high example that he has left you.

He was always the best of brothers to me,

and at the time when my hold on life—moral as well as physical—was very feeble he acted in such a way as I cannot describe even to you, my dear boy. Someday I will tell you.

Your affectionate Uncle

H. B. F.

XXVII

From Mr. Hilary Beam.

PRINCES GATE.

DEAR OLD FIDGE,

Happy New Year to you. I met a girl at Princes Miss Franks I think her name was, she is going to Sonchaud tomorrow, a decent sort, skates rippingly. I go to Princes most afternoons, it's topping, only I don't skate well enough. I haven't been to any plays except the Pantomime, the Palace and the Nut Girl. What price Beetle hunting? I should like to see him, wouldn't you? Nobbly gave me a jolly decent report, said I was painstaking, I don't think. The Vulture said I was dilitary and specious; isn't he a rotter? When do you go to Bluhn's? I suppose you won't speak to any of us next half. Well, I must stop now. Goodbye.

Yours to the dustbin

TRABS.

XXVIII

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

A delightful long letter from your Mother this morning tells me most of the news about you—the competitions, the ice carnival, the cotillons, the New Year's Eve festivities and so on. It sounds immensely gay and exhausting, but the air is champagne and everybody is holiday-making, so that perhaps the ceaseless surge of distractions is not so trying as it sounds at a distance. Are there no quiet corners? A mighty restless creature, that great hotel of yours perched on the edge of the mountain—and how in the world did it ever get there? The ceaseless stoking of fires, the ubiquitous waiters and chambermaids, the sleepless laundry—all that undercurrent of ministration appals me. And how wonderful the manager of such a palace has to be; for twelve hours a day and more he has to be at the beck and

call of everyone, smiling and bowing and deceiving and flattering, never forgetting faces or names, never betraying a shadow of irritation or boredom; and yet before that he has transacted all the *business* of the hotel, the superintendence of correspondence, of commissariat, of service. But it is the kow-towing routine which must take it out of him most.

Your Mother says that you like Barclay Tennant and that he has been very kind to you and that you are indignant because I referred to him as a waster. Perhaps it was not quite the best word. I should have said drone or dilettante or something less suggestive of Gaiety Girls and racing: 'amateur' is perhaps the nearest word, and has the advantage of not implying a sneer always. It takes all sorts to make a world, and Tennant is one of the most fascinating sorts. You cannot help liking him: good looks, charm of manner, grace of body; the quiet ease of good breeding; brooding eyes, a slow smile, a mind alert, he seems never at a loss and yet always on the search for something. Captain of the School, Keeper of Mixed Wall, in the Eleven, Keeper of the Fives, he went to Oxford and only took a second

class in Greats. But he had a first-class brain and has still. He has done most things, as you have probably discovered. He has a comfortable income derived from Cumberland iron-mines. He knows as much as any man in the world about mining. He is a county cricketer, but never plays. He was in Parliament when he was twenty-six and chucked it at the next election. He has made inventions, he has bred champion retrievers, he has won the Grand Prix at Monte Carlo; he has travelled here and there, and been on geological expeditions. He has published a book of verse now worth its weight in gold; a volume of philosophical essays which is always being quoted by the professors; and the most charming series of travel sketches that I know. He has an almost unique collection of intaglios—if you know what they are—and knows as much about the eighteenth century as anyone in London. There is hardly any sphere of life in which he could not excel; he does not fail because he is frivolous or easily bored; he fails because he cannot convince himself that anything is worth doing. His very fastidiousness thwarts him at every turn: and as he has never had anybody to drive or cajole him into

any profession he remains and always will remain an amateur. I blame Eton in a large measure for this result, and Oxford too. The well-bred fastidious boy is encouraged as far as culture is concerned: but somehow his backbone is not strengthened. I cannot say where the fault lies exactly: but I see the trend and the issue. It is as if Eton paid a great deal of attention to the palate, but neglected the digestive organs: or, to put it otherwise, as if she fostered taste rather than appetite. I'm not afraid that she will have this effect upon *you*: your instinct is all towards action, and I think you will never meditate overlong upon the ultimate value of your actions.

I suppose that Tennant skates beautifully, and, being the best performer on the rink, sits on a bench at the side and talks gravely to children or helps you to master an edge or chaffs a pretty girl. If he is in the mood he will tell you the most wonderful stories; I shall never forget one of his South African tales—he was in the I.L.H. and mentioned in despatches—about a Tommy and a Boer who wounded each other desperately and then shared their food and drink till the ambulances came up. I wish I was with you.

It is bitterly cold and damp here. I have been amusing myself by cleaning and dusting my books, which badly needed it: it is a slow and pleasant occupation, for there is hardly an old friend among them who is content to be put away without a few minutes' conversation, and I have even made some new acquaintances this morning which may ripen into friendships when I have leisure for more reading.

Adieu. My love to your Mother. What is your exact address at Beaulieu to be?

Yours affectionately

H. B. F.

XXIX

From Miss Ambrose.

HOTEL MAJESTIC, SONCHAUD.

My dear, I believe I am going to miss you dreadfully! in spite of all our fine resolutions. It was horrible hearing the train puffing down the hill and to have to go back to the hotel and be cheerful at dinner. Elsie was sweet to me; I think she rather suspects, but she hasn't said anything. Of course it was a *soirée dansante* and I had one dance with that horrid Slocombe boy; he certainly dances rippingly, but that isn't everything, is it, eh? And I felt so melancholy that I stopped after about two rounds and escaped. Mr. Tennant spoke to me as I was passing his table in the Hall and made me sit by him, and began to talk about you almost at once. I was *very discrete*! He said all sorts of nice things about you and that you were such a good *son*; and he talked a bit about your Uncle too and said what a lot he might have done if it

wasn't for his health. Dear, I hate being here without you, I want to go straight home. Write and tell me how you get on and cheer me up if you can.

Your loving

LETTICE.

Is that right ?!

XXX

From his cousin Raymond.

ROYAL HOTEL, NICE.

OLD son, are you there? I'm here. Are you coming over for the races on Sunday? If so, look out for me; I'll be wearing my pink bowler and yellow mittens. If not, come over here one morning and we'll have a cocktail. Tell Aunt Lou I'll keep you out of mischief, even if I have to get into it myself to save you. I suppose she wouldn't like to see me? We might all lunch together at a village called Monte Carlo along the line; there's a pub called Cheero's—Ciro's, I mean. Sorry—result of drink. Telephone to me.

Yours

RAYMOND.

It's all right: I'm not incog. She wouldn't come.

XXXI

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

Now I really do envy you, wholeheartedly. I was a little diffident about Sonchaud; and when a couple of inches of snow fell here on Thursday night I decided that I do not really care for snow. Peter was even more emphatically averse to it, and declared that he would not go to Switzerland in winter 'not if he was stinking of money.' But I gather from your Mother's letters that you both had a capital time and were lucky in your weather, and not altogether unlucky in your fellow-'sports.' Miss Lettice has been sending home budgets of ecstatic news, and I understand that she has been teaching you to dance—none of those flopping antics, I hope, that I read about in Punch. Which reminds me that a Wykehamist called Hatherleigh who lives near here—you met him, didn't you?—has

been to Sonchaud twice: in fact everyone I meet seems to know the place. I asked him what he really honestly enjoyed most of all out there; and after a moment's hesitation he said 'Bumps'—from his account a very barbarous game played by the younger folk in the evenings. I wonder whether you played it, and if you did, whether you would put it above skating and lugging and skiing. Quite possibly *you* would choose dancing!

But I *do* envy you your first impression of the Riviera. I would have given anything to have been with you and to have heard your opinion when you first saw olive trees and mimosa bushes, and later on when you came to Cannes and saw the overwhelming richness of the gardens, and that wonderful contrast of the vivid sparkling sea on your right and the bare gaunt mountain ranges on your left. Perhaps you were too tired and travel-stained to notice much; but another year when you go there again you will feel the thrill of it as you get near the coast and into the world of orange groves and lemon groves and see the vast tapestry of bougainvillias on garden walls. It is a good many years since I was there, and from all accounts trams and trippers have vulgarized

the whole coast from Cannes to the Italian frontier. But Lord bless me nothing can destroy the sunlight and warmth and the colour of the sea, and the little villas and the smell of the gardens. You will be enchanted unless I am very much mistaken in you. I think I know just about where the villa must be, and I am not clear whether it looks on to Villefranche Bay or Beaulieu. If you have time for walks, go along to St. Jean and St. Hospice; it may not be so unspoilt as when I remember it, but it cannot be anything but charming; and you will go in a motor car no doubt where I used to go on a bicycle up to the hill villages, along the Grande Corniche and down to Mentone—a most glorious bit of road. I *shall* be disappointed if you are!

Write and tell me everything; describe the villa and the people and how you spend your time, and how it all strikes you. I expect you will hear a good deal of talk about ‘play’ which will not mean very much to you. Your Mother will enjoy herself—and all the more if she knows that you are happy. She thoroughly deserves to have a fling.

Your affectionate Uncle

H. B. F.

XXXII

From Miss Lettice Ambrose.

SONCHAUD.

MY dear, I loved your letter this morning. It came just as I was going out and I took it up to the rink and read it sitting on the bench where we sat that morning when you kicked a hole in the ice with the heel of your skate and then suddenly looked up at me and said, 'I say, are you fond of me?' and got up and dashed away round the rink before I had time to answer. You *were* mad that morning! I shall never forget it, will you? When I read your letter this morning it was almost as if you were sitting beside me again. But you weren't, and Major Broom came up and interrupted me and made me go round with him. I am in the writing room now; Elsie came and asked me to play twos and threes in the ball room but I wouldn't and she was mighty inquisitive. She and Graham

Shooter are rather thick ; they were lugging together all the afternoon and arrived back long after last train-load were all in. It made me feel rather lonely. Why does Fate take a delight in upsetting happy people ? But I wish you were not bored at Beaulieu ; and yet I'm rather glad you are. Why don't you arrange to stay at Low Orchard before you go back to Eton ? I am starting on Wednesday and shall get home late Thursday night. Father is going to meet me in London. Why do you say your Mother is suspicious ? I hope you didn't leave my last letter lying about. You had better burn them. The cotillon last night was *very* good, but I was bored stiff. Mr. Tennant and Mrs. Lely led it. I had to go on the stage with a lot of others for the Japanese lantern wheeze and I peeped into *our* salon and *what* do you think, there is a German maid *sleeping* there !! I call it desecration, but I suppose the hotel is very full. Mrs. Lely *is* a snorter, but she dresses devinely and she is very kind to me. She is running everything, now your Mother is not here to snub her. George dear, I do love your Mother. Do you think she approves of *me* ? And I am rather fond

of you too. Be a good boy and don't flirt with anyone.

Your loving

LETTICE.

P.S. Betty Broom sends her love. She is always talking about you.

XXXIII

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

Isn't it just like the contrariness of the human mind that I should be writing to you to say how much I envy you at Beaulieu, while you were writing to tell me that you ache for English mists and proper fires and English servants? These last few days I have been thinking of you constantly and picturing your surroundings and recalling half-forgotten experiences and adventures which have made that part of the world precious in the warehouse of my memory: and you—you are frankly bored by it all, conscious of little but dust, vile roads for motoring, painted women and sallow men, and the heartless round of dissipation which it is so hard to justify. By all means come here on your way back to Eton if your Mother can spare you: your room is always ready, a warm welcome is always simmering

on the hob, so to speak, against your arrival. But I shan't believe in you till I actually see you.

I am also a little nervous of you till I find out whether your extremely moral tone of mind is the result of Monte Carlo or whether it is now your usual way of regarding things. It is always disturbing for a middle-aged reprobate like me to be left to the mercy of a youthful saint, and I doubt if I could endure the strain of hypocrisy that would be necessary in order to cope with one. This 'ghastly chatter about gambling day and night,' the 'crowd of greasy foreigners' and the 'utter emptiness of everything'—my dear George, I hardly recognise you in this stern moralist. I rubbed my eyes when I read your diatribes. It is clear that something unusual has happened to put your nose so completely out of joint. My only hope is that you have not been thrusting your views down your Mother's throat as well; if you have she will be uncommonly glad to pack you off to England again.

Forgive my chaff. I am *really* very sorry that you are disappointed: but from the first I was sceptical about the wisdom of

going to stay with a boy who has been till quite recently your pet aversion. It was a great risk anyhow, but especially out there where by reason of your age you would be left to amuse yourselves in a place where young men of your age are not particularly catered for. You like the villa, but do not care for the De Bluhns' friends: you like the garden, but it is small; you like the hard tennis court, but De Bluhn cannot make a game with you; you like the look of the peasants but cannot talk French to them. There is a but to everything and the sum of buts has made you restless, and being restless, irritable; and being irritable, denunciatory; and being denunciatory, unfair. You *are* unfair. I am the last person in the world to uphold the Riviera because of the society or the gambling: I hate society in the narrow sense and am a most impossible gambler because I cannot bear to lose money; but I would dearly love to spend another winter and spring in that enchanted land. It is absurd to talk of Monte Carlo as a gigantic exploitation of vice; you might as well say that it is a gigantic exploitation of good music or of fine air. Gambling may be a very dangerous amusement for some

natures, like drinking or smoking or playing golf; but at Monte Carlo it is at any rate beautifully organised and stage-managed: there is no swindling; I am told that the Casino only makes about 12% a year on its capital, because the upkeep is so expensive; and all sorts of people who never risk a five franc piece get the benefit of that upkeep. Believe me, if you want to castigate vice there are many other places in the world where it is more rampant than on the Riviera.

You will think me the Devil's Advocate; and I daresay that on the whole I am glad that you have not taken to the artificialities of villa-life with enthusiasm. But, George, what I want to urge upon you more than anything else at this time of your life when you are meeting all sorts of new aspects of life and are daily developing your faculty of 'right judgment,' is that you should be tolerant with the tolerance of strength and not of weakness—for flexibility is stronger than rigidity, you know; and that you should beware of the clean-mindedness which consists only in having a peculiarly keen nose for dirt. Thank goodness, there is no chance of your becoming a prig. There is

room in the sun for prigs and 'inhibitionists' and faddists of every colour; but 'what God hath made, call not thou common or unclean' is a good precept for all hot-headed Peters. I think a dose of Stevenson will do you good.

But where is that sense of humour which I relish so much in you? Is it possible that you are in love?

Let me know when to expect you.

Your affectionate Uncle

H. B. F.

XXXIV

From Miss Betty Broom, aged 10.

SONCHAUD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

I am so sorry not to have written before but I hav'nt had time, one day there was a Gymkana and I won a little enamel box (first prize). I feed the birds here every morning, first they have biscuit then rolls mixed with water, the other day I counted six all sitting on the railing. I have got a little friend here called Jacques Besard (Belguim) his mother is very fussy and thinks he isn't strong he is always having medesines or having his tempreture taken. To-day his brother had an axedent on the bob run (lugin) nothing serious.

With

love

from

BETTY.

XXXV

From Miss Lettice Ambrose.

CONDERWOOD.

MON cher, Here I am back again at home ; we had an awful crossing and I was wretched, but Madge was splendid. They have gone straight back to Warland and I came here with Father last night. Your puppy is a darling : you will love him. I met your Uncle in the post-office this morning, and he had got your postcard saying you would be here on Monday. How lovely ! I had to try and look indifferent, but it was hard, and he asked me funny questions about you and Sonchaud. He said did I think you had fallen in love with anyone out there!!! This letter will just catch you before you start, I expect. If I don't hear from you again I will be at the post-office for the second post at 11.30 on 'Tuesday. Perhaps you will be strolling down that way ? A bientôt.

Toute á toi,

LETTICE.

XXXVI

From his Mother.

BEAULIEU.

My darling son, I am having a lazy day, and sitting in the loggia. Naomi and Eric have motored into Nice, so I am all alone and enjoying myself. We were *very* late last night; Naomi gave a dinner at the Paris, all sorts of smart people, and we went on to the Club afterwards and I was very lucky *for a change*. But I think it tries me more winning than losing, and we didn't get back here till after one, so I am a perfect sight to-day. I got your wire alright and was glad to know you were safe with Uncle Harcourt. Your letter arrived this morning. It is sweet of you to apologise to me for having been bored! I don't wonder you were: I think Eric is a most dreadfully dull creature; he played the pianola all this morning and nearly drove me silly while I was dressing. Mind you write to Lady de B. if you haven't already. She is *very* kind

to me and lets me do exactly what I like, as if the villa were my own. I wish it was! You need not be alarmed; you behaved *beautifully* and I was very proud of you. Keep that grey suit and don't wear it till the weather is warmer.

My dear boy, *of course* you are fond of Lettice! There's no need to tell your Mother that. I am very glad that you should be fond of her; at your age you ought to be fond of someone, and she is a dear girl and so pretty. I don't want you ever to feel that you must 'confess' that sort of thing to me; I want you to tell me quite naturally, and perhaps then I can be some use to you. But I am glad that you *have* told me about Lettice, because I was waiting for it! You must have been enjoying yourself at Conderwood unless Uncle Harcourt insisted on chaperoning you the whole time; but by the time you get this letter you will be back at Eton. Eric starts tomorrow. Poor boy, I am rather sorry for him; his looks are so against him. I can't see why Naomi is so proud of him. And old Sir Judas watches him all the time in his quiet way very lovingly: it is almost pathetic. You *will* be good this half, won't

you, and not quarrel with Eric or make things difficult for him to manage. I am so anxious that you should please your Tutor and be a good influence in the house. Don't let Lettice monopolise all your thoughts, and don't write too much to her: letters waste so much time. Be sensible, remember you are very young, and also that you have got to leave Eton at the end of the summer, so you must make the best of your last two halves. I am moving on to Monte to-morrow to stay with the Hoiles at the Hermitage and expect I'll go back to the flat in about ten days or a fortnight. What a long letter this is! There is a lizard watching me and I daren't move or he will scuttle away. The sun is glorious, and I wish you were here to enjoy it with me. Bless you, my dear boy,

Your devoted and loving

MOTHER.

XXXVII

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

You were not, I hope, unduly inconvenienced by the loss of your shaving soap, which Sarah is now packing up to send after you. Up to date we have found nothing else of yours left behind; but from certain gaps in my bookshelves I gather that you must have taken my copy of the Portuguese Sonnets with you, as well as Weir of Hermiston and Lapsus Calami. They are all rather precious copies for one reason or another, and you will let me have them back when you have done with them. Have you read any more of the Ionica that I gave you? There are no end of beautiful things in it, but I daresay you will find some of the allusions obscure. Lapsus Calami is easier reading. Both of them, Johnson and Jim Stephen, were insatiable Etonians and contrive to express the feeling of Eton in

different ways. Here is the poem that you found in Dorica: you may like to have a copy.

‘What bears Etona on her shield?’
 What her true son should be,—
 A valiant lion in the field,
 At heart a fleur-de-lis.

He shall go on in ruddy sheen,
 And lion-like oppose,
 Foremost in brunt of battle seen,
 And grappling with his foes.

But ever at his heart of hearts
 Stand thick the lily-sheaves,
 To cool his rage and heal his smarts
 With their fair virgin leaves.

’Tis his to conquer, to endure;
 All taint of ill he shuns;
 Still lion-hearted, lily-pure
 Be all Etona’s sons.

It is very jolly, isn’t it? simple and lofty, as befits a classical scholar; and even a lower boy could understand it.

It was a great treat for me having you here even for only a few days instead of the longer visit originally promised: and you are a most admirable guest and companion. Positively the house seems empty tonight.

Ben lies curled up in his basket; Sarah has gone to bed long ago, and everything is quiet. But I should like to think that you were asleep upstairs, or better still that you were sprawling in that armchair and making me polish up my rusty wits to answer your questions. Next holidays you must come again and stay longer, and I must ensure that the fair Miss Lettice does not leave Conderwood and lure you to some strange land in pursuit. But in the meantime your days are full, and you will have to buckle to if you are going to pass Smalls. Of course examinations are odious and futile; so are evening shirts; their modification or abolition is only a matter of time. For the present you must grin and bear them, or else forgo Oxford and dinner parties. It might even be well to take your work seriously, though I suggest this with diffidence; what I mean is that sooner or later you will change your attitude towards it, so why not now? You are in Pop and therefore expected to alter your outlook in many ways; you are working for an examination which will make a lot of difference to your future and therefore are justified in treating it in a more *elderly* way than

hitherto. You would be furious if I suggested that when you play football your object is to slack as much as possible without being noticed; and similarly in work it is really not playing the game if you expend all your ingenuity in cheating the master of his due and making his job as hard as possible. It is not childish, for children are generally very keen on their lessons; but it is boyish, and though I am sure that the pedagogue is chiefly to blame if he does not get good work out of his division, yet boyish obstructive tactics may well be left behind when you are on the verge of manhood. I might also add that the less you depend upon Kelly's Keys the better—and also the less you sap at night with a candle reading lamp or an electric torch or whatever is the vogue nowadays. But I hate saying this sort of thing to you: it looks so dreadfully uncleish when it is written down. Evidently I had better put the lamp out and go to bed!

Yours affec.

H. B. F.

XXXVIII

From Miss Lettice Ambrose.

CONDERWOOD.

MY dear, it is lovely having you here, and it is lovely when you go away and write me letters. At least that is how I try to comfort myself when I feel extra drefful lonely, as I do this afternoon. I read your letters over and over again, and try to picture you in your room at Eton, and wonder whether you really love me. You do, don't you? But I wish you hadn't put my photograph up on your mantlepiece and let everybody see it. I meant you to keep it hidden away somewhere. I have got that darling snap-shot of you in the Shelley love poems you gave me. The others that I took the other day aren't developed yet. I'll send them when they are. Have you told anyone about us? I suppose when they see my photograph you say, 'That's a girl I met in the holidays—rather a decent sort,' don't you? Do be discrete, darling. I had a very kind letter from your Mother this

morning and she says she is so glad that you are fond of me and that you have got someone to keep you straight ! and I am not to let you write to me very often because you must work for your Oxford exam. I love her being so understanding and taking it so quietly ; I thought she would hate me. Somehow one expects grown-up people to be stupid about that sort of thing. I know Mother would be if I told her, but she hasn't the faintest idea of it, I'm sure. I feel rather deceitful, especially when she mentions you ; but perhaps the fact that it is our secret makes it more lovely. It is very fine to-day ; lots of sun and cold wind. I had Angela and the pups in the garden room, and the door open so that they could play about on the lawn. Archibald is a great character and seems to know that he belongs to you ; at any rate he is devoted to me and tears after me down the paths far ahead of the others. If only he *was* you ! I pretended he *was* this morning and made him sit on the edge of the table by the window just where you did, and then I sat and talked to him and he looked at me in such a pleading comical way that I had to take him up in my arms and hug him and kiss him. But even *then* I was pretending he

was you ! Dear one, already I am thinking about nothing but seeing you next holidays in London, and whether you will be just the same as you were for those glorious days last week. It all seemed so much more *real* here ; there was nothing to distract us. But at Sonchaud it was more like flirting, the same as everyone else, and it was so difficult to be alone together without everybody noticing it ; but still, that was ripping all the same, and I'll never forget the night of the ice carnival. Up to that moment when you suddenly kissed me I hadn't dreamed how far we had gone : but then I *knew* how often you had nearly kissed me. Bless you, my dear. I wish it was the carnival *tonight* !

Your

LETTICE.

XXXIX

From his Mother.

THE HERMITAGE,
MONTE CARLO.

DEAREST boy, I am glad you have made so many good resolutions, and only hope you may be able to keep *half* of them ! I think it is the hardest thing in the world : it seems to mean doing something which is against your nature. For instance I made a resolution yesterday not to play on single numbers, because I had been losing rather badly : but no sooner did we sit down to the tables than—the very first coup—I found I had won on zero. Of course after that I had to back single numbers, and I won quite a lot. I should have done better, only Raymond would stand behind me and talk. Poor boy, he had had shocking luck all the time he was out here and literally couldn't play at all, so of course I had to lend

him something ! I believe that was why he came over to see me at the hotel. He made himself charming to Vera Hoile, and she asked him to dine at the Paris last night. He certainly has delightful manners, however impossible he is in other ways. I suppose he has got some game on at Nice, but he said not. Who do you think turned up at the Club last night ? Mrs. Lely who was at Sonchaud and made me so angry the way she made eyes at you. She was *most* gracious and charming, and had several men with her. I introduced Raymond to her in order to get rid of him and she monopolized him for the rest of the evening. I can't help rather liking her : she is dreadfully bad form of course, but she is *so* amusing and she seems more in place at Monte than at Sonchaud. Still I would rather you were devoted to dear little Lettice than were playing tame cat to a woman of her type ; and it is bound to be one of the two ! Raymond is going home tomorrow : and I am off next Wednesday. How I hate the idea of the train-journey ! And Thompson is such a bad traveller, worse than useless. I shall never bring her abroad again. I shall stop in Paris for a day or two to get some clothes, and then straight back to the flat. Write

to me at the Hôtel Meurice, Rue de Rivoli,
Paris.

Your loving and devoted
MOTHER.

P.S. Naomi was delighted with your letter,
and says you are such a 'boy of the world'!

XL

From Miss Lettice Ambrose.

CONDERWOOD.

WHAT a dear silly old darling you are, George my beloved, to talk of marriage! We are so happy just being in love with each other, and we can't get married for ages anyhow, can we, my dear? It's what father calls 'not practical politics.' Of course it would be gorgeous to be always together and have a house of our own and never have to think whether anybody is near; but how can we? We're only eighteen, and I couldn't possibly marry you till you had been to Oxford. My grandmother married when she was seventeen but then grandpapa was 25 and that makes all the difference. Dear one, grow up quickly, as quick as ever you can, and then perhaps our dreams will come true. I *am* engaged to you in my heart; but we couldn't have a public engagement; everybody would laugh at us, and I don't know *what* Father and Mother would

do if it was even suggested. No, my dear, let us stick to what we have got, and thank heaven for it. I trust you and you trust me, and that's enough. It isn't that I don't love you better than anything or anybody in the world; you know I do; but we must face facts and be sensible.

You seem to have been in a very 'miggys' mood when you wrote that letter, poor darling. I wish I could peep in at the window sometimes and see you 'sapping.' You mustn't work too hard and make yourself ill; you see, you aren't used to working at all, are you, eh? so it is bound to be a strain at first. Funny that you should be out with the beagles yesterday, because *I* was out with the hounds, and if you had run on and on and on and I had ridden on and on and on, perhaps we should have met and oh how I am longing to see your dear old face again. We had a very good run and killed in the field just at the back of Low Orchard; wasn't it funny? Your Uncle came out to see the fun and asked us in to tea but Father said we must get home because of the horses. I want to see your Uncle and to get him to talk about you, but I don't see how I'm to manage it unless I make Mother send me

down there with a note or something. By the way I *did* go to see Mrs. Brian this morning and bought some bullseyes for an excuse and she began gossiping at once and said that you were a fine young gentleman, 'with those daring eyes of his,' she said. Wasn't it quaint? She *is* a character. I must stop now, my dear, and slip out and post this before dark. You may only write twice a week, you know: but they must be lovely long letters, mind, or I shall break our resolution. I like that Eton Society newspaper; but don't use envelopes with the crest on or Mother might notice it and be suspicious!

Goodbye, my dear one: and be sensible, because I *am*

Your loving

LETTICE

and always shall be.

XLI

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

Your letters are always welcome even if they are only little scraps written in Pop Room when you are pottering about and there is no one to talk to. I find that the time when I like writing letters most is always the time when I have hundreds of other things to do. For instance, I am particularly busy just now. I have at last summoned up energy to get some extra shelves put up in the little morning-room, and I am sorting and arranging your Father's library which has been stacked on the floor for the last six months, reproaching me whenever I ventured to go into the room. They are your books of course ; I only offered to give them a home because your Mother was proposing to store them till she had room for them : and I am not sure that I should have made the offer if I had realized how

many there were. They never looked very numerous in the old library at Strahan, but a lot were packed away in passages and attics. I was hard at work sorting and dusting them this morning, very dirty and dishevelled, when Miss Lettice turned up with a note from Lady Ambrose; so I commandeered her services and we got on like hot cakes, I sorting the books and she arranging them. It is a fascinating occupation; you never know what you are going to find next; and it was lunch-time before we had done anything. However she has promised to come again, like the kind creature that she is; and I really believe she likes feeling that she is useful to someone. It must be dreary for her at Conderwood when there are no visitors; and she is a girl with what the old writers call sensibility, likely to feel the restraint and groovishness of her life at home. If she keeps her promise and her Mother lets her come here I hope to get to know her better; one of my little vanities being that I fancy myself able to interest young people in books! Confess that you have read more in the last six months than you ever did before, and that you really enjoy it. Of course I am *too* bookish myself. The world would never go

round if everybody was like me ; but then I am condemned to an inactive life, and my library is the greatest possible boon to me, and I am able to hold converse with the dead instead of with the living. I always think that your Father steered a very good middle course in reading. At Eton he never read anything but a few tales of adventure ; when he was at Oxford he was inspired by a young don who had an extraordinary influence over undergraduates, especially of the sporting type ; and for the next two years he read very widely and wisely. By the time he was thirty he had chosen his favourites and there were five or ten books which he read perhaps every other year for the rest of his life. Besides these he found time to keep pace with new books of the kind that interested him, chiefly biography and travel ; and it always astounded me that a man of such varied practical interests and responsibilities should have been so well in touch with the best of the new literature. He had the gifts—which I have never acquired, if indeed they can be acquired—of reading quickly and of remembering what he read. I wonder if you will take after him ? Do you ever go into the new library at Eton ? It is a great improve-

ment on the former one in New Schools ; but I was very fond of the still earlier one in College. But of course we had none of those excellent collections of novels and travel books that Major Myers gave the school and which lure so many boys who would never have set foot in the place under earlier conditions. Your Father by the way seems to have had a number of books about Eton, and I have a hazy idea that he bought them out of charity from an old Collegger who had fallen on evil days. I must have a look at them tomorrow.

Yours affect.

H. B. F.

XLII

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

Miss Lettice and I have had another strenuous morning with the books. She was not able to come yesterday or the day before—when she was hunting—but I had made some headway single-handed or, what is practically the same, with only Sarah to help. Her idea of helping is to dust a book very carefully and then place it upside down in the wrong shelf. But today with Lettice to clamber up and down the ladder for me, I got straight with about a hundred volumes. She is a most entertaining companion, far more intelligent than most pretty girls. We had one serious delay, but it was a very pleasant interlude. I was rummaging on my knees among a litter of historical pamphlets when I became conscious of the long silence in the room and glancing up saw my assistant perched on the top of the steps and absorbed

in a book that she had found—the prettiest sight imaginable, sitting in a most graceful attitude with the thin sunlight on her hair, and her face bent low over the book. It was called ‘Eton Sketches,’ and what had particularly engrossed her attention was a picture of Pop in the old days when it was in the room over Mother Hatton’s—about where the new Library is. A debate is in progress. The president, sitting at a table on a high dais, is visibly yawning; members sit round the walls in various attitudes of boredom; the secretary is writing hard, and a guest sits at the table with his arm carelessly thrown over the back of his chair, while at the end of the table is a boy in swallow tails and (apparently) white trousers making a speech. ‘Is that what George has to do?’ asked Miss Lettice, and when I assured her—rightly I trust—that you were spared that ordeal, she replied that it would certainly be an ordeal, for the others. The whole of the book is very interesting and we spent the best part of an hour poring over the different scenes from Eton life which I had to explain in detail. Odd it is how little the manners and habits have changed since 1841 when these anonymous etchings were

published. I must show you the book the next time you are here, if you will remind me.

How does work go?

Your affectionate

H. B. F.

P.S. I forgot to thank you for returning the books. They arrived safely yesterday.

XLIII

From Miss Lettice Ambrose.

CONDERWOOD.

DEAR one, I have been too busy to write. I have been helping your Uncle to sort and arrange books! It *is* such fun and I love it. He makes it all so interesting and talks all the time about each book as he hands it up to me to put in the top shelves. I like him awfully and am so sorry for him not being able to get about like other men: but I don't suppose he needs pity really because he is so happy with his books. I love it when he fetches that shepherd's crook from the corner and hoiks (how *do* you spell it?) the book he wants from the top shelf and catches it. And the books accummulate on the floor till he has to get Sarah in to put them all up in their places again. Mother likes me going down to Low Orchard because she says your Uncle will improve my mind. I think he will, too, if I have got a mind to improve. He told me a lot about your Father and their being at

Eton together and how your Father was always so kind and considerate to him ; but somehow I think it must have been dreadfully tantelizing for your Uncle not being good at games when your Father was so good at them, don't you? Dearest, I love hearing about him because it makes me know you better and understand why you are such a darling! Of course I think your Mother is sweet too and I love her; but she doesn't *explain* you altogether. It's wonderful how your uncle *adores* you: he does nothing but talk about you; but perhaps it isn't so wonderful after all! I mustn't write any more like this or you will get conceited. It is settled that we go to London in about a fortnight. Father is going to take a flat. I am not a bit excited and I know I shall hate all the dances and things. But you will be there in the holidays and then—oh gorgeous. Why am I so silly about you? I don't seem to have a thought about anyone else. It's lucky I haven't got an exam. The pups are all right: I have brought Archibald in, he loves to sit by me while I am writing to you in my bedroom, and I shall have to smuggle him out to the kennels again in a minute. He is eating one of my slippers and when I

asked him whether he sent his love to you he just looked up, flapped his great ears, wagged his tail and dashed across the room to fetch the *other* slipper. He is a quaint little beast. Goodbye, chéri. Do you ever think of your

LETTICE.

XLIV

From his cousin Raymond.

BUFFALOES CLUB.

DEAR old chump, you slipped away from the sunny south without telling me. But I saw Aunt Lou and took a capital dinner off her smart friends. Ruinous place Nice. Love is so dear out there, what? I say will you be *chez vous* next Sat.? Thought of motoring down if fine. Friend of yours, Mrs. Lely, wants to see the place, *vie intime d'Eton*—excuse me I'm a bit Gallic nowadays. Suppose you couldn't give us tea? Lunching Stoke Poges, I expect.

Tooraloo.

RAYMOND.

XLV

From his Mother.

HOTEL MAURICE.

MY DARLING SON,

I am delighted to hear that you are working so hard and that you have done so well in the sports. Don't buy any silver cups if you can help it: you know what a trouble I had finding room for all your Father's, and it makes extra work for the maids. Can't you get tie-pins or links or something sensible instead? I am still here, as you see, and have got comfortable rooms; but I have been hindered by the dressmakers, they always want to fit me and I get tired to death and can't enjoy anything. The Markby's are at the Bristol and I go about with Lena a good deal. We went to the races at Auteuil on Sunday, but it was dreadfully cold and I could not stand it, so we came away. Forgive this scrap, I have

just had luncheon and must go to Doucet's to be fitted.

Your devoted

MOTHER.

Be careful if there are colds about, and keep some cinnamon lozenges by you. How do you get on with Eric this half?

XLVI

*From Hugo Turnbridge
(formerly his fagmaster).*

HIGH STREET
OXFORD.

DEAR FIDGE,

Of course I meant it. I should have been deeply offended if you had gone anywhere else. I shall expect you Monday week, and am asking Dawson and Kingsworthy to dine.

Yours ever
HUGO T.

XLVII

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

How time flies. I had no idea you were going up for Smalls so soon. You will enjoy yourself much more staying with your old fagmaster than being given someone else's rooms in College or sent to the Mitre; it will give you some faint idea of life in digs which you would not otherwise get; and as term is over you will not have many men in and out of the house to distract you from the immediate business of Smalls. Do not be nervous about passing: if you have been working 'steadily' you ought to have no difficulties. Your assurance in your last letter that 'in fact' you are steady in every way this half reminds me of Mackworth Dolben's translation of the Martial epigram—

'In vain you count his virtues up,
His soberness commend;
I like a steady servant
But not a steady friend.'

So I trust that you will relapse into occasional unsteadiness when your examination is over! and have not the least doubt that you will. There is a slight want of balance in your abuse of all examinations; you see how futile they are in your own case, and jump to the conclusion that they are futile for everyone else. Naturally there is no defence for cramming; and a system of public school education which makes it necessary for all the so-called stupid boys to go to professional coaches before they can pass any University or Army examinations must be in that respect wrong. My friend Hepplewhite, whom I hope you will meet up at Oxford next week—I am writing to him to warn him of your approach—told me that he was examining for the Eton scholarships one year, and in the Latin verse paper there was a line,

‘I scoured the plains with tremulous eyes,’

and seven boys, who all came from the same preparatory school, translated it

‘*Percurrit campum noster spectantis ocellus,*’

all, as you observe, using a most far-fetched idiom, and all omitting the important epithet 'tremulous.' Of course, if only one had used it the examiner would have marked him as a boy with some knowledge of Latinity. We, who have been through the whole gamut of examinations have a just grievance, knowing how little our knowledge has been tested, how accurately our superficial information has been gauged. And, perhaps, now I come to think of it, there *is* this excuse for cramming, that it only wastes a moderately short time and that its effects soon wear off. The wickedness lies not in the examinations themselves—for they *may* be conducted upon wise lines—but in the attitude of mind which they encourage in boys. You get, don't you? into a habit of thinking that the work which you do during the half is done simply with a view to trials, as if the papers were to be set on a certain date about certain subjects and certain books, and that *therefore* you were obliged to get up those subjects and books during the half. That is all wrong. Moreover you find that if you do some 'trial sap' in the last fortnight—which your division master and your tutor will definitely encourage you to do—you will

probably know more about the Greek play or whatever it is on the appointed day than you would if you had prepared your lesson carefully every time during the half and had not done any trial sap. And if you forget the whole thing by the first day of the holidays, what matter? That is the main accusation which people who think about these things bring against the examination system. They call it pulling up bulbs to see how they are growing. But there *is*—so it seems to me—a time when it is legitimate to examine the bulbs, and that is the time when you are transplanting them, when, for instance, a boy leaves school for the Varsity or the Army. The men who are going to take up the education of a boy have a right to make a preliminary enquiry as to the state of his intelligence; but, to keep up the gardening metaphor, it must be done very delicately, without disturbing the bulb more than is absolutely necessary. By which I mean that I believe in a *viva voce* examination on general subjects—the sort of thing that I understand is an important part of the Admiralty examination for Osborne. It is right that you should understand how strongly people feel about the stupidity of

the present system, even though you are yourself a victim of it. Otherwise you might imagine that we grown-up people were all blindly in love with a scheme of education about which you yourself had no illusions. The general dissatisfaction is a healthy sign, and you must not suppose that men like your tutor approve because they do not actively rebel; Poincaré defined Progress the other day as 'Order in motion'; and though the wheel of educational reform is going round very slowly I am convinced that by the time your sons go to Eton you will find that a complete revolution has been effected. Luckily you are not a scholarship-hunter; so the mischief will not eat to the very heart of your development, as it does with so many prize-winners. Not much is demanded of you in order to pass Smalls and to get a Pass Degree later on, and so long as you realize that you have got to educate *yourself* it will be your own fault if you don't. The opportunities are at your hand.

Your Mother seems to be hung up in Paris, which is usually the pleasant fate of women who mean to stay a couple of nights and to order a few clothes. But I hear from her this morning that she expects to

be back in London by the end of the week.

I shall want to hear your impressions of Oxford.

Your affectionate Uncle

H. B. F.

XLVIII

From Mrs. Lely.

ST. JAMES' COURT.

DEAR George, (is that permitted?) I must write you a line to thank you for looking after me so well on Saturday, and such an excellent tea! I loved my first glimpse of Eton and hope it may not be my last; and feel myself very lucky to have had such an important person to show me round! I adored your cosy little room with all those wicked-looking canes stuck about the pictures and the pretty photograph of Miss Ambrose. She is a lucky girl to have the place of honour in your kingdom. I hope you didn't cane that poor little fag for not making the tea with boiling water. I thought of him all the way back to London—he was in such a *blue funk*. I am going to the play with Raymond this evening: what a droll creature he is, to be sure; but I wish I was going to have you as an escort instead! Perhaps next holidays we shall meet and I can return your hospitality.

Yours very sincerely

NIGELLA LELY.

XLIX

*From Mr. Hepplewhite,
Fellow and Tutor of Prince's College.*

OXFORD.

DEAR MR. FITZ GRANNET,

I hear from your Uncle that you are coming up for Responsions and shall be very glad if you will give me the pleasure of making your acquaintance at luncheon on Tuesday next at 1 o'clock. My rooms are on no. 3 staircase in the inner quadrangle.

Yours sincerely

STEPHEN HEPPLEWHITE.

L

From Miss Lettice Ambrose.

CONDERWOOD.

MY DEAREST DEAR,

Why no letter today? I spent such a wretched morning, but I suppose you are too busy to write, and perhaps too busy to read this either, but I'll write just the same as it is a comfort to me. I went to the post-office for the second post, but *still* there was no letter, and I know it is silly of me to be disappointed, but I can't help it, darling, I do so count on your letters and think of nothing but when the next will come. This afternoon I walked down through the woods because this reminds me of you almost more than anything here except perhaps the garden room; the log is still there by the side of the wood-stack which you pulled out for us to sit on, and I could see the holes you made in the ground with your walking stick. It gave me quite a thrill! Then I walked on to Low Orchard and found

your Uncle in the garden with Peter and Ben. He was so sweet to me and said he was sorry the books were all arranged; and he took me into the house and gave me a book which belonged to his Mother once, as a reward for helping him.

We go to London on the 23rd. Father has taken a furnished flat in St. James' Court, which is somewhere near the Stores. Write to me, my dear one, if you haven't already—just a scrap to tell me that you love me and think of me sometimes.

Your
LETTICE.

LI

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

I received a note from your Tutor this morning which ought more properly to be sent to your Mother; but perhaps it is just as well that it didn't, as it would have worried her. He complains that last Saturday you had people to tea without his knowledge, and that they not only filled your room, but the passage too, with the obnoxious fumes of tobacco! This appears to him to show a grievous want of consideration on your part, and he is not pacified on being told by you that your guests were your cousin Raymond and a lady who was said to be a friend of your Mother's. As you know, your Tutor disapproves rather strongly of Raymond; and he is evidently under the impression—gained, I suppose, from the report of a boy's maid or porter—that the lady was of somewhat startling appearance. No doubt

he has spoken his mind to you on the subject, and perhaps you were not particularly penitent; so the good man writes to me and lays his complaint. It is all very paltry and I have written refusing to interfere in any way because it seems to me that in matters of discipline a housemaster ought to make his rules and see that they are kept, without appealing for help from the outside: and I feel inclined to bring a pipe with me the next time I go to visit you in your room. But, after all, here am I writing to you and on the verge of lecturing you on your iniquities. It was hard for you to prevent Raymond smoking, if he wanted to; or the lady either—whoever she was; but they ought not to have done it. Perhaps you had a cigarette too; and if you say ‘Well, what if I did?’ I’m afraid I must smile and say, ‘Nothing, my dear George.’ But what I feel is this. Don’t put your Tutor in this kind of predicament. If you want to smoke or play cards or do anything which is against the rules, do so, accept the risk, and, if you are found out, the punishment. But don’t shield yourself behind other people. I am thinking, not so much of this Raymond episode, as of an occasion last half when

you induced your Mother to ask for dentist's leave for you in order that you might meet Miss Lettice in town! Mothers are very indulgent, but it is not fair to put them in false positions of that kind. If you think it over for a moment you will see what I mean. And now forgive me for appearing to uphold your Tutor against you—which I do not *really* do—and believe me ever your affectionate uncle

HARCOURT B. F.

By the way who *was* the lady, if it's not indiscreet to ask?

LII

From Mrs. Lely.

ST. JAMES' COURT.

DEAR GEORGE,

How nice of you to write to me, and to say that you weren't dreadfully bored having to show us round everything. But I am sorry that you got into trouble over those cigarettes. I thought you would, but it was Raymond's fault, wasn't it? It is dreadful the way he smokes all the time: but they are very harmless ones. I should like to send your housemaster a box! I am so glad to hear that you are going to Oxford; I used to know a lot of boys there, but now I don't know a soul. I seem to have dropped out of *everything* nowadays, and it makes me feel lonesome when I think of you in the middle of all that rush and bustle and excitement, right in the thick of things. But I have got my music and that is one comfort. You will be in London after Easter, won't you? I must show you those songs I

was telling you about, if your Mother will let you come and see me. This is quite a dear little flat: at least *I* think so. Good luck for your exam.

Yours very sincerely

NIGELLA LELY.

LIII

From his Mother.

SOUTH STREET.

MY DEAREST SON,

Here I am back again at last. I thought I was never going to escape from Paris. It will take me three or four days to settle down, and of course everything has contrived to get into its wrong place while I was away and half my clothes were mixed because Thompson packed them so vilely. Never again will I allow her to touch any of my boxes. I shall be so glad to have you with me again soon ; I feel a little as if I had been neglecting you all this time, but I have been so busy and stamps are so expensive abroad that I'm afraid my letters have not been regular. But *yours* sound very happy and contented, and I was sure that as soon as you settled down to school life again you would lose your restlessness. Yes, what a wonderful amount of time your Uncle Harcourt wastes writing letters. But it amuses him, poor man,

and Father always encouraged him to write to him as often as ever he felt inclined, and I suppose *now* he thinks he must write to *you* instead! I think that is a very good idea about your going to Lords in the holidays to be coached. Do you want me to do anything about it before you arrive? I suppose it will cost a good deal, but it will keep you out of mischief. Will Lettice be in town too? She ought to have been presented this year, but she told me her Mother forgot all about it till too late. She must be a queer person. I suppose you are at Oxford doing your exam, but you don't tell me your address, so I shall send this to Eton. I am so glad that you are good friends with Eric; dear boy, you *can* be charming to anyone if you take the trouble. Is the Newcastle a race? Anyhow I hope he will win it; his mother would be so pleased.

Your loving and devoted

MOTHER.

LIV

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

I'm sorry that I was wrong in suggesting that perhaps you smoked a cigarette yourself: or rather I am glad, but sorry that I suggested it. You evidently think that I am very lax in my views and that I ought to take a higher line than I do in all these matters of conduct. I plead guilty; but I shall not reform. Probably my uneventful, unenterprising life has made me look upon escapades and lawlessness of all sorts as attractive rather than otherwise. I enjoy nothing so much as what is called the Literature of Roguery, and one of the few plays that have really given me pleasure is *Raffles*, which we went to see together, do you remember? You have two great treats in store for you—reading '*Lavengro*' and '*Barry Lyndon*,' which are probably in your house library; but, if I know your Tutor, he will

not allow 'Tom Jones,' which was written by an Etonian, to be within your reach. I am a heretic about this question of undesirable literature, and though it is generally supposed, for instance, that the novels of Harrison Ainsworth had a very bad effect on the youths of his day, and led to an increase of crime, I cannot help believing that the harm which they did to unbalanced minds was more than compensated for by the pleasure that they have given to sensible people for three generations: and not only pleasure, but *savoir faire*. It is the greatest possible mistake to encourage by repression a belief among boys that certain books are 'naughty': or girls either, for that matter. We are not made good or bad by what we read. I have come across men of notoriously evil lives who have never heard of Rabelais or Petronius; whereas one of my oldest friends, the dearest, simplest fellow in the world, who is always being swindled by his servants and shop-folk and can never pass a beggar in the street without giving him something—but this is in memory of Charles Lamb—is an acknowledged authority upon thieves' cant. I shall never forget my disappointment when at last I got hold of a

copy of the Decameron, a book which I had expected to find full of the most inconceivably delicious wickedness: disappointment so keen, that for many years I was unable to see any charm in the stories at all. No, the 'inhibitionists' are strong to-day, but they won't get me to agree with them. They would prevent us from seeing or reading anything at all. They gloat over the witty parody, 'We are all of us lying in the gutter, but some of us have got our noses down the drain.' Really, George, it makes me very angry when I think of ordinary healthy boys like you being led to believe that books like *The Yoke* must be smuggled into the house and hidden under your mantel-shelf along with your cigarettes, because they are extraordinary and unhealthy. If you have such weak stomachs as all that, you would be better in a country where printer's ink and tobacco are unknown.

You are indebted to Lady Ambrose for these remarks. I was up at Conderwood for tea and the question of controlling Miss Lettice's reading cropped up. Lady Ambrose's point of view is simple and sensible. She says in effect that everybody is degene-

rate. If you talk of health, they talk of disease; if you talk of goodness, they talk of wickedness; if you talk of beauty they talk of the Post Impressionists. 'I don't wish Lettice to be like the rest,' and so on. Of course I agree, to a certain point. But I came away in a depressed frame of mind. It isn't possible to bring up girls (and boys) in cottonwool any longer: modern conditions have destroyed all control over information. If you are in a country with a strict censorship over its journalists you have only to send to London for the *Daily Mail*. Censorships are defunct, impracticable. Some women are ignorant all their lives; others are 'alive to everything,' as we say, before they are twenty. But still the old confusion between innocence and ignorance lingers on. There are a great many disgusting things in this world—some of them universally and inevitably thrust on our notice; and I think that one ought to be capable of being disgusted. It is an instinct. But not shocked. 'A gentleman is never shocked,' said Emerson (I think). You may be disgusted if you see a man ill-treat a woman; but I would not have you feel shocked even if a bricklayer fell from a scaffolding on to

the pavement at your feet. Cruelty and meanness are disgusting, but if we have ever looked into our own hearts we shall not find them shocking.

As usual I find myself discoursing to you as if you were another old onlooker like myself, sitting in the other arm-chair. Well, there are a great many things which you have got to puzzle out during the next few years, and if I can urge you to take a fearless and liberal attitude from the very beginning I shall feel that I am doing what your Father would have done himself; and if I can be of any use to you it will be because the basis of my counsel is candour.

Your affectionate Uncle

H. B. F.

LV

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

You are becoming quite a philosopher. No doubt stolen pleasures are sweetest as you slyly suggest; and that is precisely why if I had my way there would be no question of *stealing* them; if the garden gate is left wide open and not merely temptingly ajar there will be fewer people after the apples. I did not mean to suggest that you *had* read *The Joke*, surreptitiously or otherwise; I am not sorry that you haven't, for it is not a particularly sensible book; but I should not be surprised if you *had*, considering the absurd fuss that the inhibitionists have made about it. Nor do I think you need fear that all the flavour will be taken out of life by overmuch 'candour'; glare is as trying for the eyes as twilight; but I must confess that where there are stumbling-blocks in the path I would prefer to have reasonable day-

light to go by instead of the delicious excitement of barking my shins in the dark. A walk through the woods at dusk is delightful and romantic ; but I take a candle when I go down to the cellar.

Your affectionate Uncle

H.

LVI

From Miss Lettice Ambrose.

CONDERWOOD.

MY DEAR ONE,

I was glad of your letter this morning and have been happy all day. It is sweet of you to find time to write to stupid me when you are so busy, and I love you for saying that you hurry in from early school to get my letter. If you only knew how I tear downstairs every morning so as to get into the dining room first before Father and Mother see the post! I think Walters suspects something; this morning I was rather later than usual and simply flew downstair, and he was at the bottom with your letter on a salver! I said thank you and went into the dining-room and there was father reading the paper by the window and waiting impatiently for breakfast. I loved Walters for that; not that father would have noticed probably if there had been a *van-load* of letters for me with your

photograph on each! I'm glad you enjoyed staying at Oxford. But what fun it will be when you are an undergraduate. I shall be able to come and see you then, shan't I, often and often? I don't like you being at Eton when I can't get at you; at least I feel somehow as if it will be easier when you are at Oxford. Darling, I am so glad you told me about Mrs. Lely and your cousin and the smoking and all that, because yesterday afternoon I met your Uncle and he suddenly said to me 'Do you know a Mrs. Lely who was out at Sonchaud?' and I told him yes, and he asked me what sort of woman she was and I told him she was a bad lot and then he told me she had been to tea with you at Eton, and he frowned the way he does and tilted his hat back and looked at me a minute and said 'Hasn't George mentioned it to you?' and I said no. Of course he did not mean to be unkind, but he made me *wretched*, darling, and I imagined all sorts of horrible things and was oh so unhappy and cried when I was going to bed because I thought perhaps you were fond of her and wouldn't tell me. So this morning when your letter came I was happy again; but I thought I must tell

you about it because I am worried today for ever having doubted you for an instant, my love. Will you forgive me? It's dreadful to be so jealous, I know; but I do love you so and feel that you are easily flattered by *designing* people, and she *is* very clever and good-looking though I hate her. Dear, write and tell me it is all right.

Your loving

LETTICE.

LVII

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

I am delighted to hear that you liked Hepplewhite, and that he was friendly to you. He is an excellent introduction to Oxford life, and you were lucky to see something of undergraduate life, under the guidance of Turnbridge. I have never met *him*, but his father was a contemporary of mine and his death at Bloemfontein a very sad business. I should have liked a fuller account of your impressions and what you saw, and am sorry that I forgot to recommend a visit to the Botanical Gardens, though to be sure it is a little early for the *pyrus japonica*. Still, you describe Oxford life as 'quiet and free,' and I am content to know that the charm of it has appealed to you: though perhaps if you had been up when term was in full swing, the quietness might have escaped you! That remark of

Hepplewhite's about rowdiness is good ; and I remember his telling me once that when he was Dean of the College and responsible for the maintenance of order he discovered by experiment that the value of a pane of glass to an undergraduate was exactly 5/- : if the fine were reduced to four and six there would be a marked increase in window-breaking. That sardonic tolerant attitude towards everything is typical of Oxford, and though Hepplewhite and your Tutor were in the same year at Magdalen and are both leading academic lives, the difference in outlook is startling. There are schoolmasters who ought to have been dons, and dons who ought to have been schoolmasters ; but your Tutor and Hepplewhite are in their right places, the former as a ' Gulliver among his little people,' for ever conscious of his mastership, for ever urgent, working at high pressure, always on a pedestal ; the latter, as you found him, lounging on a sofa, smoking at his ease, with delightful manners, interested in everything apparently except work. The contrast is not a fair one ; for you have not seen your Tutor in the holidays, nor Hepplewhite reading a paper on cuneiform inscriptions to a learned Society. He is a man

with an European reputation, and when you met him next day in the High in cap and gown with a huge folio under each arm and he didn't see you, he was precisely the same man as your host at luncheon who delighted you with his collection of prints of famous pugilists and his violent attack on all dons. I have always relished his gentle mockery, but it is largely because I know the profundity of his mind and the unceasing intellectual labour to which he has sacrificed all the best years of his life. If he spoke of himself to you he probably informed you that he was seriously contemplating giving up his fellowship and going on the Stock Exchange. That is one of his jokes of which he never tires, and which he enunciates with a more savage sincerity every time I see him. I should like to hear his opinion of you!

Meanwhile I am forgetting to say that I hope you have passed Smalls. Your own diffidence is a good sign, and I cannot believe that if you have been working at all you can fail. By the way I had the curiosity the other day to ask Miss Lettice what your Mrs. Lely was like, and I received rather an unfavourable report. So perhaps your Tutor had some justification for what you call his

‘stuffiness.’ Does your Mother know of the incident? I gather that you had not mentioned it to Miss Lettice. To be sure there is no reason to blame you in the matter; but I feel inclined to let Raymond know that he has been very inconsiderate; and that if he proposes to go to the ‘demnition bow-wows’ he need not walk his pups at Eton. Unfortunately he accepts rebukes with the same good-humoured carelessness as he would five-pound notes if any one was fool enough to give them to him.

Your idea of net-practice at Lords is capital. London mornings are always a problem, and there is the additional advantage of improving your chance of getting your Eleven next half. But I hope that this plan will not preclude your visit to us here, upon which we are all counting. Peter has even suggested that we should put up a net on the lawn and that he should bowl to you every day! Do the holidays begin next week?

Your affectionate Uncle

H. B. F.

LVIII

Telegram from Oxford.

Passed Bellamy Schools.

LIX

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

Forgive me if I jumped at a hasty conclusion. Perhaps Miss Lettice was prejudiced against the good lady for reasons which I can only guess.

A postcard came from Hepplewhite this morning simply stating that you appeared to have some knowledge of boxing! He is a queer character. You say in your letter that he did not thrust his brains down your throat, for which you appear to be grateful: and, if you knew him better, you would be struck by his extraordinary modesty even on subjects about which he is an acknowledged authority. And yet it is not the mock-modesty of a certain Eton Master—you were never up to him—who, so I'm told, whenever a boy makes an outrageously wild shot at a word in construe, says mildly, 'I don't think it *can* mean that; of course it *may*, but that's not its general sense. We must look it up in a

lexicon.' Hepplewhite's modesty is that which belongs in a greater or less degree to all book-bred men. I have been looking up Bagehot's essay on Oxford and came across a very sensible passage bearing on this point. 'A man who finds out all that he knows is rarely remarkable for calmness; the excitement of the discovery, and a weak fondness for his own investigations, a parental inclination to believe in their excessive superiority, combine to make the self-taught and original man dogmatic, decisive and detestable. He comes to you with a notion that Noah discarded in the ark, and attracts attention to it as if it were a stupendous novelty of his own. A book-bred man rarely does this; he knows that his notions are old notions, that his favourite theories are rejected axioms of long-deceased people; he is too well aware how much may be said for every side of everything to be very often overweeningly positive on any point.' That seems to me an admirable statement of the case, none the less so because it exposes itself to the derision of the 'self-taught and original man.'

I am writing to your Mother to ask her when she can best spare you in the holidays

and for how long. Sarah is already airing your bed.

Yours affectionately

H. B. F.

I open this letter again to send you a delicious quotation from a little book called 'Letters from a Father to his Son on his entering the Army,' written eighty years ago. 'There is another fashionable practice,' he says, 'or I should rather say folly, which I regret to see so prevalent. We now can scarcely meet a boy turned of twelve, who does not parade the street with a cigar in his mouth.' The advice with which the father follows up this startling beginning is well calculated to amuse his, I hope, imaginary son. But I must add one more gem. 'When you quit the mess-table, which I again entreat may be early, if you have no engagement for the evening, retire to your own room, and spend it in some useful way. You have many resources within yourself. There is your drawing, your music, and your books.' Charming counsel, don't you agree?

Later.

Your wire has just come. Heartiest congratulations. I thought you would pull it off.

LX

From Miss Ambrose.

ST. JAMES' COURT.

MY dear, I really don't see that you have any reason for saying that I made mischief. When your Uncle asked me about her I hadn't the faintest idea that you had seen her. If you had thought of telling me beforehand I might have told your Uncle all sorts of lies about her; as it was I simply said what I thought and what I still think. I think it's horrid of you to write to me like that: and it makes no difference to me in the least whether she speaks nicely about *me*. Is there any reason why she shouldn't?

LETTICE.

LXI

From his Mother.

SOUTH STREET.

DEAREST SON,

I am *so* glad that you have passed Responsions. You must be sick of examinations! How can they be so brutal as to make you go in for Trials after all you have done at Oxford? I am sure that *really* everything that they do is sensible, but I don't know anything about education and it often sounds so silly. However you will be here on Thursday and can forget all about it. I enclose a cheque for £4 and you must make it do. We shall have to economize for a bit—I ordered such a lot of rubbish in Paris and it *must* be paid for somehow. No, I will *not* put you on your allowance till you leave Eton. Your Father would not have done so and there is no sense in it anyhow, you would only get into debt. There are very few people in town yet, and I haven't

seen or heard of the Ambroses and do not know their address. I met Mrs. Lely in Redfern's this morning—awful woman!

Your loving and devoted

MOTHER.

LXII

From Miss Ambrose.

ST. JAMES' COURT.

DARLING, forgive me for writing you such a horrid letter. The moment I had posted it I hated myself and wanted to write another and then I thought I would wait till I heard from you. But I haven't heard and that hurts worse than if you had been real angry with me. Dear one, *do* forgive me. I didn't mean a word I said; and I've been miserable ever since, and I hate this flat because it's so uncomfortable even to be miserable in: when I am crying I think everybody can hear me in the other rooms and last night I had to put my head under the clothes. You *don't know* what I feel like—it's dreadful, and I *know* it's all my fault for being so silly and *cattish*, and that makes it worse. Write and tell me you still love me, or my heart will break.

LETTICE.

LXIII

From Miss Ambrose.

ST. JAMES' COURT.

My darling, I loved your letter, *loved it*. You *are* sweet and forgiving, and I don't mind having been so unhappy because I am so gloriously happy now. This is only a scrawl to greet you when you get to the flat tomorrow. I *must* see you. Can't you come round here and call or something? Mother won't let me go out alone of course unless *your* Mother asked me to something. Don't telephone : it is in the hall here and everybody hears every word. I believe Mother is going to Harrods tomorrow morning ; but I don't suppose you would find us ; it's such a crowd there. We go out about twelve. Think of something, my dearest.

YOUR LETTICE.

LXIV

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

Your long silence is doubtless a sign of your excessive business; or perhaps it is that you find it impossible to write letters in the flat. It certainly *is* very difficult to settle down to letter-writing unless one has got into the routine of London life: and of all restless places in this world commend me to a 'compact' flat for discomfort. Compactness is the devil; it means that you hear the servants washing up and the people next door telephoning: and *you* have not even the refuge of a club. However if you are wise and if you have any friends similarly bottled up in London, you may find a good many interesting things to do out of doors. If I were with you I would drag you protesting to all sorts of impossibly dull places; but there are one or two that you would positively enjoy without any guide, but merely a com-

panion. Plan one or two expeditions, for instance to Kew Gardens, or to Greenwich; I suppose the steamers are not running yet—if running is the right word. The Zoo of course on Sundays; and make a point of getting into conversation with all the keepers; it makes it ever so much more interesting, even if you have to tip them. I enclose some tickets in case your mother has not got any left. Also walk to Kensington Palace across the Park, look at the Dutch garden—which is charming—and then plunge into the London museum where you are bound to find heaps of things to interest you. Don't stay in a museum for a moment after you begin to feel bored or tired. Then there is the United Service Museum in Whitehall, quite small; I promise you that you will enjoy it if you get one of the attendants to describe Waterloo and Trafalgar to you with the models; and then talk to him about his own experiences and get him to show you the more modern things, De Wet's heliograph and so on, and to tell you the history of the room and King Charles' execution. Mind you do these things, and if you insist on treating them as a sort of holiday task even that is better than nothing!

I gather from your Mother's letter that her time is spent entirely in gallivanting about with you and chaperoning Miss Lettice; which is very pleasant for you and Miss L, and, to a certain point, for your Mother. But though she would not breathe a word of complaint, I seem to detect, or perhaps only to imagine, a danger of over-devotion to the task of keeping you amused. It is not by any means an easy task for you to steer a course between seeming to be unable to stir without her and seeming to be able to get on *too* well without her. But that is precisely what you must try to do. More than ever she is anxious to devote herself and her time and her interests and even her health to your happiness; but it is a sacrifice which you must be very tactful in accepting and refusing. I sometimes wonder if you realize what a splendid Mother you have got, and how few boys have Mothers who are real confidantes and companions. It often astounds me to see how sensible she is about you, and how brave she is in little things—just the little things where the excellent ordinary Mother acts a little hypocrisy for the benefit of her children. It requires courage to be natural, I assure you; and only the

inferior type of mother pretends to be better than she is in order to set a good example to her children. One hears so often of parents who are at logger-heads and who play the parts of devoted husband and wife in holiday time for the benefit of their children; poor souls, what a dreadful strain it must be, and how seldom it must deceive the children! You are lucky all round, especially as I gather from your Mother's letter that she is fond of Miss Lettice and likes taking her about. But I hope this does not mean that I shall not be able to lure you down here. When do you begin cricket?

Your affectionate Uncle

H. B. F.

LXV

From Mrs. Lely.

St. JAMES' COURT.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

From my lonely window I espied you this afternoon as you stalked across the courtyard no doubt on a visit of gallantry to the fair lady whose photograph adorns your room! I did not know that they had taken a flat here; but with the inquisitiveness of my sex I enquired of the porter where you had gone and he told me. So the next time you pass this way I hope you will make a point of coming in here afterwards and seeing my tiny home. There is always tea at five o'clock and you are always welcome. Tomorrow, for instance?

Yours very sincerely

NIGELLA LELY.

LXVI

From Mr. Hilary Beam.

PRINCES GATE.

MY DEAR FIDGE,

It's alright about next Wednesday. I told my mater it was your birthday and that you were going to have a party and wanted me particularly ; she was jolly decent about it and said I must give you a present, so I'll try and get an extra quid which will be useful. My guv'nor hasn't been told yet, I expect he'll make rather a fuss, but my mater will put it straight. I heard from Beetle : he says he can easily fix it up with his grandmother as it's for a birthday, I don't think. My mater was so jolly decent because I told her we had been to that rotten Museum and she thinks you're no end of a good influence for me. What ho for Wednesday. We'll make things hum at the Empire.

Yours to the pit,

TRABS.

LXVII

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

You sound very desperate, and I presume that your liver is out of order for want of exercise. Has the Lords scheme fallen through? If it has you must either devise some proper way of getting exercise—skating at Princes, or squash racquets or even roller-skating—or else you must come down here. It is no use loafing about in town and being liverish and making your Mother's life a burden to her. You really can't expect her to take you out to the theatre every evening and to supply you with limitless pocket-money and to make her head ache devising schemes for keeping you employed—and then to grumble because she likes you to go shopping with her occasionally, and takes a pride in showing you to some of her friends. It is out of all reason that you should demand everything and be

prepared to give nothing. It is obvious that the restlessness of London has caught you and that your Mother and you are getting on each other's nerves. Your Mother is not a very strong woman and has never been able to go out night after night unless she has complete rest during the day. She is tired out, and if you find that her patience is occasionally ragged, it is only what you must expect. You are the man, you are the son: it is for you to look after her, to see that she does not over-exert herself and to be unfailingly gentle and thoughtful. It is just in circumstances such as these that the true fineness or selfishness of a man's nature is shown. It is possible that your irritable letter was written in a momentary mood which has passed; but I can't allow you to think that I sympathize with you when you say that your Mother keeps you short of money or that she always wants to know where you have been. I know from experience that you have no sense of the value of money—like a great many charming people—and I know equally well that your Mother is a model of good sense in her care for you. A good dose of some other Mother would be the best physic for you.

It's all liver, I'm sure; and I'm using the word in the Latin sense, as the seat of the affections. If I may make a guess you find the restrictions of life a little irksome as far as Miss Lettice is concerned; you can get no real walks and talks together, and chaperoned interviews are worse than nothing. And in fact you are hipped all round. Isn't that so? Now when you have read this, go and have a long walk and when you come back go and kiss your Mother and say you are sorry for having been such a grump.

Your affectionate Uncle

H. B. F.

LXVIII

From Miss Ambrose.

ST. JAMES' COURT.

DEAREST, what does it all mean? Father came in at seven and said he has just met you in the Court yard, and he thought you had been here. I thought he had made a mistake so I rang up the flat and your Mother answered, and I asked her and she thought you were here and had been here for tea the last three days! And when I told her I hadn't seen you since Sunday she seemed very distressed and said you must have been going to see Mrs. Lely. Oh George, do tell me it isn't true. I can't believe it: I *won't*. You couldn't behave like that. Come and tell me it isn't true the moment you get this. I shan't sleep a wink tonight. I'm the most unhappy creature in the world, and it's all because I care for you so dreadfully. For God's sake tell me it's a lie.

Your loving

L.

LXIX

From Mrs. Lely.

ST. JAMES' COURT.

DEAR GEORGE,

As you probably know I had a very unpleasant interview with your Mother this morning; but I hope I convinced her that as far as I was concerned I had not the slightest idea that you came to see me without her knowledge and consent. Of course I would never have let you inside my flat if I had dreamed that your Mother would disapprove. Perhaps you are too young to distinguish between what is honourable and what is dishonourable, but I hope that you will never put another woman in such an unpleasant position again.

Yours truly

NIGELLA G. LELY.

LXX

From his cousin Raymond.

BUFFALOES CLUB.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

What the devil have you been up to? Have you no gumption? I consider it's infernal cheek your going to see Mrs. L at all, and to go without telling Aunt Lou is not playing the game at all. It's the sort of thing little boys are smacked for. So put your tail between your legs and meditate in your basket for a bit.

Yrs

RAYMOND.

LXXI

From Miss Ambrose.

ST. JAMES' COURT.

I GOT your letter. You might have come round yourself, but it doesn't matter now. I was a fool ever to mind.

LETTICE.

LXXII

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

So you've been scalded ! I was afraid that a crisis was imminent when I got your last letter, but I didn't guess that you were going to make quite such a fool of yourself. Come down here tomorrow and we'll have a good laugh over it. Laughter clears the air : and when we have turned it over and seen the ridiculous side of it, we'll turn it back and look at the serious side. I am grateful to your folly for one thing : that it is the cause of my receiving one of the most pitiful and beautiful letters I ever read in my life ; a letter that will always be precious to me and of which I shall not read you one word unless I find that you are as remorseful as I expect you are. But these are the points which I commend to your notice as subjects for meditation on the railway journey tomorrow : (i) That you are far more capable

of making a fool of yourself than you ever imagined. (ii) That you are lucky rather than otherwise in having had an experience of this kind earlier than most men do. (iii) That your chief folly consisted in not asking your Mother's advice. (iv) That even a clown may break a heart; (v) that a man cannot do a wrong action without a woman suffering more than half the penalty. This, I believe, is universally true: and (vi) that Liver is a contraction of Lucifer.

I am writing to your Mother, who will doubtless be glad enough to be rid of you and your vagaries. But I go about the house chuckling to myself, and I really think I must tell Peter.

Your incorrigible Uncle

H. B. F.

LXXIII

From Mr. Hilary Beam.

PRINCES GATE.

DEAR FIDGE,

You *are* a rotter. You swore you would come and we shan't enjoy the binge at all without you. When are you coming back to town? Could you manage the last day of the holidays? Let me know and I'll put Beetle off, you had better *wire*: and I can tell my people that you have put off your birthday party. Don't forget to wire. Beetle will be mad anyhow, as he had fixed it all up with his grandmater. You don't say why you have gone out of town, but I suppose it's that girl.

Yours pretty rattily

TRABS.

Mind you arrange for the last day of the hols. the 25th and don't be a scug.

LXXIV

From his Mother.

SOUTH ST.

MY darling Boy, Of course I forgive you. I'm afraid that whatever you do I shall forgive you, that is the privilege of Mothers. But, George, I *was* dreadfully hurt that you should have concealed anything from me and I can't quite get over it though your Uncle tells me that is one of the *penalties* of being a Mother. I'm afraid I drove you to it rather because I was tired and irritable; and I ought to have foreseen it and warned you against that woman: not that she is really a bad woman, she was very sensible about it all, but I know she led you on and liked making a fool of you, so I don't *really* blame you. It was *my* fault: and it won't happen again, will it, darling? I can't bear to think that you should *blunder* into things like this when I could so easily save you from them if only you would let me. And you are so young, which makes it

rather worse. It looks as if you had not been properly brought up. And *poor Lettice!* that is what upset me most. I went to see her today, and she was as white as a sheet and I could tell she had been crying dreadfully, but she *begged* me not to say anything to her Mother, so I didn't, but I hate *not* saying things outright when they are in my mind, so I shan't go there again. If you could only have seen her you would *realize* the mischief you have done by your thoughtlessness. My dear boy, I don't want you to make light of it, as I am afraid your Uncle may make you do. He does not look at things quite as your Father did, and your Father would have been *horrified* to think that his son could be so thoughtless and foolish and cruel. You mustn't think that I am unjust and unsympathetic; but I *know* that you ought to feel that you have done wrong and to be *really, heartily* sorry. You were only *playing* with Lettice's affections, and that is a cruel ungentlemanly thing. She has suffered bitterly because you have hurt her *faith* in love and that is a dreadful injury for a girl of her temperament.

I am so worried because I think I ought

to tell your Tutor about it. He may not care to have you back at Eton next half: and it is hardly fair to let you go back without telling him. I must think about it. I am nearly distracted. If only I had sent you to Low Orchard before Easter. But it's no use now. I must think out what is best to do and what your Father would have wished.

Your loving and devoted

MOTHER.

INTERLUDE

*Letter from Harcourt Fitz Grannet to the
Honourable Mrs. Fitz Grannet.*

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR LOUISA,

George is in the kitchen garden with Peter digging or sawing wood or listening to the old man's gossip. He is very subdued still and has not much of an appetite and looks pale; but there is no reason for you to worry. After luncheon he showed me the letter he got from you this morning—came to me with it and said 'Will you read this letter from Mother and tell me what it means?' He is honestly puzzled and bewildered by the whole *affaire* and my great fear is that he may grow sullen and rebellious. He cannot for the life of him understand what all the fuss is about. He is quite ready to admit that he acted foolishly, in fact I have got him to laugh at himself consumedly for having gone to tea three days running with Mrs. Lely. She is evidently an attractive

woman and he succumbed to the charm of her bergerettes — you can't blame him. He is perfectly frank about it and rather more innocent than, I confess, I expected. There was no question of flirtation, not even a kiss—(this on his oath!) He rather enjoyed the *truancy* of the visits; it did not occur to him that he was acting *shabbily* towards Lettice any more than it would occur to him that he was treating his Tutor shabbily if he had used a crib in school. What Mrs. Brian at the village shop here is always calling his 'daring eyes,' are part of a rather daring temperament. You will always find that he is game for an adventure and not perhaps inclined to weigh the rights and wrongs of an enterprise beforehand.

The fact you must face, my dear Lou, is that George is in most respects very like every other boy, but that he has higher spirits than the majority and, what is far more valuable and what he owes mainly to your up-bringing, a remarkable candour and honesty of heart. There is no sort of evasion in his replies to my questions. He had the idea that you always wanted to know where he had been and what he had done if he was out of your sight for an hour ;

and also the idea that you would have disapproved if he had told you that Mrs. Lely had invited him to tea. He is very penitent about this and has, I believe, written to tell you so. What you say in your letter on this point has cheered him considerably, and he knows perfectly well that he could have no better counsellor and confidante than you. This is a very precious relation between Mother and son, which you would do well to encourage by every means in your power. He had a nasty little note from Mrs. Lely and another from Raymond, both of which made him uncomfortable. But I am perfectly certain that he has suffered no moral harm from his three tête-à-tête musical teas, and you may make your mind absolutely easy on this score. The whole of this part of the business I think ought to be treated with chaff rather than abuse.

I need not tell you how sorry I am for Lettice Ambrose. She is a girl who lives rather a lonely life and is given to brooding; and when I tell you that in her distress she wrote to *me* you will understand *how* lonely she is! Such a sweet pathetic little letter. I have tried to make her see things in a less

desperate light, but it is difficult to deal with a girl of her temperament except in conversation. May I suggest that you should have a talk with her and comfort her as you well know how to comfort a sad heart? George is really fond of her, but he does not understand what he has done that is so dreadful. She wrote to him rather hysterically and I'm afraid that he answered stiffly and unsympathetically. How *should* he know? I ask myself. He has had no experience of the violence and transitoriness of a woman's reproaches: and he was annoyed instead of flattered by her unreasoning jealousy. I am trying to patch up the breach and it will not be difficult to do so, if I am any judge of Lettice's character. But I cannot help thinking that it is a pity that she is more devoted to him than he is to her; and it occurs to me that if she had not come on the scene at all, perhaps the influence of a Mrs. Lely would have been better for him! Is this heresy? Lettice is too fond of him to be much good to him in the development of his character. However, there it is. You encouraged them in the first instance; and if his affections are to be centred upon a girl of his own age he

is extremely lucky to have found favour with such an exceptionally charming girl.

It is your suggestion of telling his Tutor which has bewildered and horrified George most. I have not committed myself to an opinion in the matter, but I hasten to tell *you* that I think it a most unwise course to suggest. That excellent man would be entirely unsympathetic and would do far more harm than good with the knowledge. Nor on the whole do I think that you owe it to him to inform him of a trifling peccadillo of this kind. If you had given George the impression that you condoned it and that he was a fine fellow, I should certainly have warned his Tutor; but I have an idea that George is not at all likely to brag about his experience to anyone at Eton, and I shall continue to present the matter to him in such a light that he will be ashamed to talk about it at all. *That* I think we owe to his Tutor. But you and I are both grown-up people, not uncomfortably straight-laced; so don't let us make too much of this escapade. Wait till he comes a real cropper; don't scare him at his first stumble. He has just come in from the garden and wants his tea. He is going to write to you before post-

time. Don't be uneasy about him. By the way, is there a Mr. Lely? and what is Raymond doing in that galley?

Yours affectionately

HARCOURT.

LXXV

From his Mother.

SOUTH STREET.

MY DEAREST SON,

I was glad to get your letter and to know that you are happy with Uncle Harcourt. He tells me that you are not *eating* properly—this is very naughty of you; you must cheer up and be your old self again. *Of course* you are not in disgrace. I am longing to have you back here, and am quite jealous of Uncle Harcourt for keeping you: but I promised him that you should stay with him this holidays, and you only went a day or two earlier than we arranged originally. I want you to come back on Monday or Tuesday because Lady de Bluhn's ball is on Tuesday night and she wants you badly: there is to be a cotillon, so you are sure to enjoy yourself and everyone will be there, and she is sure to give lovely favours. I want to have you with me first for those few days before you

go back : I'm lonely without you, and have had plenty of time to think over things and to see that I ought never to have let you come here for the holidays. It is not a *man's* flat at all, and *of course* you wanted to be always going out and *of course* I always wanted to know where you had been! That was the mistake; and I don't blame you as much as I blame myself. However it won't happen again. Next holidays we will have a little place in Scotland if I can get one cheap with some shooting and fishing; and I daresay you will get invitations to stay with friends for cricket or shooting.

I have telephoned to Lettice and she is coming round to tea tomorrow and I will have a good talk with her. You *are* fond of her, aren't you? I won't encourage her if you aren't; but I think it is nice for you to be close friends with a really nice girl like that; and there's no doubt she is devoted to *you*!

I suppose I must let you have your night out on Wednesday, as you say you had promised your friends last week and had to put them off. I don't quite know what a 'night out' means, but I think I can trust

you not to do anything that you shouldn't, and to come home in good time. Ask Uncle Harcourt if he thinks I ought to spare you on your last night at home, and if he thinks you ought to go I will let you. But you *will* remember, dear, won't you, that you are not quite grown-up yet, and that even boys in Pop are still boys?

Your loving and devoted

MOTHER.

I am not going to tell your Tutor about you: but I will talk to you about this when I see you—

LXXVI

From Mr. Hilary Beam.

PRINCES GATE.

DEAR FIDGE,

My people are jolly sick about me wanting to go out the last night of the holidays, but I laid it on thick about your birthday party and it's alright. Beetle is going to be at the 'Troc at 7.30, so we had better meet there. He has got an opera hat—awful swank, we'll rag his head off, what? Collect all the money you can raise. I met Henderson today: he is going to meet us at the Empire if he can, but we don't want him for dinner; he is jolly sidey since he went to Cambridge. Chin chin.

Yours ad lib.

TRABS.

LXXVII

From his cousin Raymond.

BUFFALOES CLUB.

AHA! Oho! stap my vitals and Sally come up. The lid is securely fastened; the crease has been transgressed by many yards.

Oh blessed Filbert, what didst thou in those Arcadian haunts yestreen? What merry prank, what friskiness, what luscious fruit allured thee? I was astonished by thy presence among yon gay rout.

In a word, my dear George, what on earth were the three little boys from school doing at Palmyr's last night? Tasting Life? Qualifying as gay dogs? You have no idea how funny you looked. It was one of the quaintest spectacles the dear girls have had for a long long time, and I shall have to go there this evening to hear all about it. That stony glare with which you quelled their amorous glances, can it ever be forgotten? My dear boy, you know you really shouldn't go and make an ass of yourself like that.

Did you imagine that Palmyr's was like little Brown's or what! I suppose you are now swanking about your doggishness at Eton: but I shouldn't if I were you. You didn't enjoy it a bit and you weren't at all naughty, and it isn't usual to eat omelettes and drink claret at Palmyr's, and the next time you want to see life don't go with other lads who know less of the ropes than you, but come to me.

Yours

RAYMOND.

P.S. What does Aunt Lou think about it?

LXXVIII

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

Again? and so soon? Have you *no* consideration for your Mother? Whatever really happened, it is clear that you have made her perfectly miserable, and such behaviour comes very badly after the rest of your disastrous holidays. Probably what you need is a good thrashing, but I am not going to judge you till I hear your version. I heard from your Mother this morning, and according to her account you persuaded her to give you a latch key and three pounds—‘in case of emergency’—and went out on the strict understanding that you were to come straight home after the theatre. You did not come in till nearly one o’clock, were extremely rude when your Mother found fault with you, had only sixpence in your pocket, and have gone back to Eton without making any proper apology or giving

any detailed account of your doings. It appears, however, that you and two other boys dined at a restaurant, went on to the Empire, and ended up at one of the worst types of supper restaurants.

I should like to hear what you have to say, but must warn you that until I hear that you have convinced your Mother of real contrition for the anxiety you gave her, I shall be unable to sympathize with you at all.

Yours affectionately

H. B. F.

LXXIX

From his Mother.

SOUTH STREET.

MY DARLING BOY,

I can't bear your having gone back to Eton without telling me everything. I was miserable all yesterday, and didn't go out of the flat all day, worrying about you and imagining all sorts of dreadful things. Your letter this morning was a great relief to me, because it shows that you know you have done wrong; and I expect your Uncle Harcourt will tell me what you have said in your letter to him. You say don't I *trust* you? Of course I do, my dear, but I can't trust you unless you tell me everything; I want to feel that you have no secrets from me. Perhaps the time must come when you will go your own way without consulting your poor Mother, but not yet; you are too young and too inexperienced and there are so many dangers all around you. It is because you are young, that you did not think I

should wait up for you. I am sorry if I was angry with you and said things which made you think I didn't care for you or trust you ; but I was so tired with waiting and in such a state of nerves that I said whatever came into my head. I am so jealous of your fair fame, my darling—you must forgive me: it drives me mad to think of what harm *might* have happened to you, and if you were to turn out badly and get fond of drink or women I think it would kill me. You *must* remember that you are all I have got ; my life and my love are all just centred in you, and if you are unkind to me or hide things from me, it makes me miserable ; and I can't bear the thought of you fouling your mind with experiences which are bad enough for a man of *thirty*. I *know* what music-halls and these supper places are and the women in them, and you are too young to be on your guard against them. Darling, I want you to tell me the whole truth, however bad it is—I shall understand and not blame you, even if it is the worst—You are my child, bone of my bone, and *nothing* can separate you from me in nature, I must always feel the same as you. It wasn't that you were disappointed because Lettice

wouldn't see you, was it? You were so sweet and loving to me when you came up here, and I was so proud of you at the De Bluhn's ball. How I hate those boys! I should like to write and tell them what I think of them; I *know* that they led you into mischief and it wasn't your fault. I am restless today, but ever so much happier since I got your letter and know that you are truly sorry for what you did; and I'm afraid I was horrid to you, perhaps just when you most needed your Mother's loving sympathy. Never mind, dearest son; we understand each other again now and all is forgiven. But I want to know exactly *what you did*.

Your loving and devoted

MOTHER.

LXXX

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

I have had a busy day. As soon as I had read your letter I wired to Raymond, Peter put Mabel in the gig and I drove down to the station and caught the 10.15. Raymond lunched with me at my club, I had time to see an excellent exhibition of engravings and to potter about the second-hand bookshops for an hour, had tea with your Mother and was back here in time for dinner: and now I am settling down to write to you in a very much more cheerful mood than I was in yesterday, I promise you. It was a very lucky chance that Raymond was supping at the same low haunt as you the other evening and was able to corroborate your account (which in itself was slightly improbable). I gather that he was sitting upstairs in a sort of gallery with private compartments, from which the discreet may observe the

follies of the lower room: and I confess that I should rather like to spend an evening there myself in an attempt to find out what it is that attracts such people as Raymond to frequent restaurants of that description. If they are half as amusing as he seems to think they are, I can quite understand your ambition to go to one; but I am sure they are *not*, and that I should be as much puzzled and disillusioned as you were. Naturally I was relieved as well as amused by his vivid description of you three boys in immaculate evening dress sitting in a corner and trying to look as if you were not bored and bewildered, eating omelettes and drinking claret—that was what delighted him most of all—and smoking cigarettes; and he assured me of what you do not mention in your letter that there were no women at your table and that as far as he could see you did not speak to anyone but the waiter. No wonder you were bored: and no wonder you were not in the best of tempers when you got home and found your indignant Mother waiting up for you with a moral poker in her hand. I daresay your liver was slightly disordered the next morning, too, if you really drank champagne for dinner and

then claret at supper followed by *crème de menthe*. The most good tempered person in the world would resent the imputation of having enjoyed himself; and it requires a very hardened stomach to endure this sort of ill-calculated dissipation.

You are admirably frank about the whole business and I was glad to be able to show your letter to your Mother. She believes as readily as I do that you never really wanted to go out for this jaunt, especially after the Lely episode; that you went because you did not wish to disappoint the other two; that you had an unexciting dinner at the Trocadero, but liked the music; that you did not promenade at the Empire, but sat in seats and thoroughly enjoyed the show; that you went to Palmyr's because one of you wanted to and didn't dare go alone; that you tried to get out of it but were over-persuaded; that the whole thing thoroughly bored and disgusted you, and you don't care if you never set foot in the place again; that you never dreamed for a moment that your Mother would wait up for you, because she had been so seemingly un-fussy about letting you go and had declared that she was going to bed early:

that you had had to pay rather more than your own share of the evening's expenses as one of you came out with only fifteen shillings: that your Mother seemed to jump to the conclusion that you had been in mischief, which annoyed you; and that if you spoke rudely to her you are thoroughly and heartily ashamed of yourself.

That is a pretty fair statement of the case, isn't it? I seem to see the whole situation and the adventures of the evening in my mind's eye, and of course after what you have told me and Raymond has corroborated I am as perfectly prepared to accept your version as your Mother is; and in fact we had a good laugh over it at tea this afternoon, laughing, I think, more from relief and thankfulness than because it was funny. For there are one or two points to which I must draw your attention at the risk of developing this letter into a sermon. Your Mother was absolutely justified in assuming that you had been in what we will call mischief. Because she had put no obstacles in the way of going out for the evening, it does not follow that she did not feel your apparent willingness to leave her alone on the last evening of your holidays very deeply;

and I was responsible very largely for persuading her to let you do as you liked in the matter. I confess I hoped that you would not go; but you were rather heedless of any hints that I dropped, and not sentimental enough to attach any particular importance to 'last evenings' as such. Your mother knew that all theatres and music-halls were over by a quarter past eleven, and when you did not come back she knew that you must either be in a restaurant or else walking about the streets. She had a full hour in which to excite her imagination with fears and apprehensions. One looks back on such periods of suspense lightly; but they are very real and terrible at the time, and your Mother suffered more than you or I, being mere men, can realize. When you came in you were curt and off-hand; you even upbraided her for not having gone to bed; and when she gave way a little, perhaps, to the strain of her apprehensions, you were brutal enough to leave her and to go to bed in a huff as if *you* were the injured party. She spent a restless, feverish night and *you* (so she says!) were pasty-faced and morose the next day: so that anything like a proper reconciliation

and mutual explanation was impracticable. You appear to think that your Mother ought to have trusted you without wishing to know where you had been or what you had done. My dear George, that is absurd: you put yourself in a very false position and though I do not now doubt your version for an instant, it is hardly what I should have expected to be a true account of your spree. Your Mother knows as well as I do—and as *you* do, too, probably—that when young men go to the Empire without their women-folk they are not generally content to sit down all through the performance and keep their eyes on the stage: we also know Palmyr's by reputation, the fact being that it is frequented by a low class of woman who plants herself at a table and waits for someone to come along who will pay for her supper in exchange for the pleasure of her exhilarating conversation. How you three boys contrived to get an unoccupied table and to escape the harpies, is a puzzle to me—and to Raymond: but he assures me that you did: and I am thankful that your curiosity has been satisfied without the sacrifice of your self-esteem. Now this is what I want to impress upon you. In

your tête-à-têtes with Mrs. Lely and the subsequent row, in the experiences of Wednesday evening, and perhaps on some other occasions of which I know nothing, you have peeped behind the curtain which conceals one of the less healthy corners of the room of modern civilization, and I do not want you to imagine that it is a terribly wicked, dirty, grubby corner, nor that it is a corner which you would never have inspected if your Mother or I could prevent you. Don't imagine that all the iniquities and delicious naughtinesses of life are concentrated in Palmyr's; there are far more wicked and sordid things going on all round you and all round me day after day. Sooner or later you would naturally become acquainted with what is called the 'night-life of the metropolis,' and there is a great deal of amusement and goodfellowship about it. But the important point is that you should not have an exaggerated notion of the charms and the desperate naughtiness of the gay half-world. You are bored rather than interested, disgusted rather than charmed? Good: but I can't help wishing that you had waited a while before drawing that curtain, and had allowed someone of ex-

perience to draw it aside for you. Do you understand?

We need say no more, or very little more on the subject for the present, though no doubt there are a great many things that we can discuss more easily in conversation than on paper. Your Mother has, as usual, shown her great common sense and has forgiven you even more whole-heartedly than you deserve to be forgiven. Now you must banish it from your mind, refrain from talking about it to other boys, and devote yourself to the really important task of getting your Eleven! That will occupy all your time and thoughts.

Your affectionate Uncle

H. B. F.

LXXXI

From his Mother.

SOUTH STREET.

DEAREST SON,

Just a scrap to tell you that your Uncle Harcourt came here to tea yesterday and showed me your letter to him. He came up to town on purpose to see Raymond about you, so he *said*; but he talked such a lot about some pictures or something that he had been to see, that I believe he made you an excuse for a day in town! He *was* so funny—his clothes and everything; and the way he enjoyed fussing about what you had done last Wednesday; I thought he would miss his train home. Considering what a *narrow* life he has had, poor man, he is wonderfully sensible; rather *too* sensible, in fact, as far as you are concerned, he does not seem to think you *can* do anything wrong! I kept on saying that *whatever* excuses he chose to make for you, you *had* been very naughty and unkind and inconsiderate; and *he* kept

on saying 'Well, just imagine how much naughtier and unkind he *might* have been quite easily, and be thankful you have a son who dares to admit he has been in the wrong!' I *am* very thankful, my dear, and I pray that you may never mind telling me *all* about *everything* that happens to you. It is *like* you to stick up for your friends and say that you were just as bad as they were; but I'm sure they must be horrid boys all the same, and I hope you won't have much to do with them this half. It is loyal of you not to make any difference because you are in Pop and they aren't, and I am sure that you will never be a *snob*, but still you must remember that you were elected and they were *not*, which shows that the leading boys in the school think you are a cut better than *them*. At least that is what I imagine; but all these societies and clubs and things are so strange to a woman, and I remember how stupid I was when you were elected to Lower Club (wasn't it?). Uncle Harcourt says that if you play up you will get into the XI: Is this true? I hope so: you know how proud it would make me, and your Father having been such a cricketer ought to be a help to you. Shall I come down to see you

one day? I shall be staying this week-end with the Troupes at Iltyd Bastion—such a lovely old house, I'm told—but next week I could motor down any afternoon you like. Let me know. I hear that Lettice is not at all well, and they have put her to bed at last, but I'm afraid she is only worrying about you. What would she say if she knew about last Wednesday! I must go and see her; I feel in a way responsible as I rather encouraged you both at one time. Now I must dress for dinner.

Your loving old
MOTHER.

LXXXII

From his cousin Raymond.

BUFFALOES CLUB.

DEAR boy, you owe me a good turn. I have whitewashed you till you are whiter than most sheets and more innocent than any choir-boy. Fortunately I was able to do so with a clear conscience, and, by Jove, when that eccentric old fish Uncle Harcourt gave me lunch at his club on purpose to pump me about your little razzle-dazzle at the one and only Palmyr's I took my bucket of white-wash and fairly ladled it out. You get the best veal and ham pie in London at that club, so I'm not sorry I went. But you are a chuckle-headed old nut, all the same, and I was strongly tempted to make the old boy's hair stand on end with some horrific account of your iniquities. It would have been just what you deserved for dragging me into the business at all. He wanted to know what *I* was doing there, and he asked me such a lot of questions about the place that I believe

he wants to go there himself and sample it. I guess he hasn't had his fair share of fun in this world yet. However I put it all right for you, smoothed his feathers down and left him in the firm belief that you had a positively purifying influence on that foetid Inferno, what? Do I hear you smile? Harcourt had the cheek to blame me for having taken the fair Nigella down to Eton last half!! But he's a decent old boy and I soon put him in his place, and he said she must be a very charming woman. Bow-wow. No matter.

Had a good day at Kempton and introduced a little friend to the joys of race-meetings. Her name? My dear George, I must not encourage you. Never again. But I'll take you to the 'Slap Up Girl' one day, if you're a good boy, and you shall hear her sing the Gooseberry duet with Paul Nargot. Gracious, I've let the kitten out of the cupboard.

Yours indiscreetly

RAYMOND.

LXXXIII

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

Well done. That is an excellent beginning and if you can only keep it up they ought certainly to play you in the first match. As soon as I had finished breakfast I went out to tell Peter the news and found him rolling the lawn, after last night's rain. Everything is very fresh and delicious and Ben showed his high spirits by running after birds and jumping into the flower-beds against all rules. Peter had filled the roller with water so full that it was almost too heavy for him. 'Aye, it do want a bit o' loomping,' he said. I told him of your 37 not out, and he agreed that it was 'grand.' He attributes it entirely to your net-practice here, and is quite reconciled to the state of the lawn. 'A thought he'd knock 'em all right,' he said. 'E seemed to take kindly to all sorts of balls,' in melancholy remembrance of his

vain efforts to defeat you. 'Ah, that's grand,' he added, 'grand.' He spat on his hands and grasped the roller. I suggested that he ought to have filled it with beer instead of water, and he chuckled while the idea percolated slowly to his imagination. 'Aye, she'd do well with beer inside her,' he said and started off with a smile on his face. I sat down and watched him dragging the roller to the further border, and listened to the pleasant rattle and creak of it. A most exquisite morning: the air was like wine. Peter was still smiling when he came back again. He had thought my suggestion over thoroughly. 'Aye, she'd be a bit lighter by evening,' he said, 'if she had beer in her'; and as he passed on he added '*that* she would,' with great relish. He made an excuse for stopping by me pretty often to combine rest and gossip, and once after a long sojourn in the corner of the lawn where you had the net he came back with a profound remark. 'I reckon the grass'll forget Master George afore *I* do,' he said. 'Them holes is comin' up nice.'

It really was the finest day we have had this year, and I longed to be up on the hills to hear the wind in the grass, and the

larks in the sky. But I contented myself with pottering about the garden and walking down to the village to see Mrs. Brian who has had a very bad go of rheumatics: and whom should I find there but Miss Lettice? and who should be the topic of their conversation but—well, I think I won't tell you. It seems that Miss Lettice has been sent down to Conderwood to recoup. She has been very poorly in London and professes to hate the round of amusements which, as far as I can make out, no reasonably healthy girl ever likes. Anyhow she is happier at home and has got some cousins and an Aunt staying with her. Sir Benjamin and Lady Ambrose are coming down for the week-end.

I am grateful to you for taking all that I said in my last letter in good part, and for understanding my point of view. The virtue which you impute to me of not being a humbug is the privilege of uncles: and I hope I have not abused it at the expense of other folk, such as your Tutor, who are tied by a number of considerations. I should be happier if I could bring you to a more charitable view of schoolmasters in general; for, like all boys, you do not err on the side of justice in estimating their diffi-

culties. Take the case you mention. You get a ticket for failing in construe and your Tutor refuses to accept your explanation that you thought it was a mathematical school. He says, 'that's *your* look-out,' and keeps you in after twelve so as to prevent your going to nets. You imply that if *I* were your Tutor, I should have believed you were telling the truth and should at any rate not have interfered with 'nets.' You are wrong. I am content to believe that your Tutor was perfectly right. Not knowing the circumstances I cannot say why he behaved as he did; but he *may* have wanted to show you at once that you are not going to subordinate everything to cricket this half, if he can help it. The summer half is such a very distracting time with its incessant whole holidays and events that the main work of the half has to be done before the Fourth of June. Besides, there is the plain question of discipline; and you know as well as I do that your reason for failing in construe was no reason at all. I remember a favourite distinction that *my* Tutor used to make. 'Have you any reason for being late?' 'Please, sir, someone had bagged my book and I was hunting for it.'

‘That isn’t a reason; that is an excuse. Write out the lesson.’ There is always a certain amount of humbug about discipline. I heard of a crammer the other day who made a number of ‘house-rules’ for the boys he was coaching, which they invariably broke. He addressed one big fellow in this way: ‘I must ask you to be in the house punctually at 9.30—I know I can’t *make* you. If you liked, you could put me out on my own doormat. But I appeal to your better feeling.’ If this is the alternative method to your Tutor’s, I must say I prefer humbug. Don’t you?

Ask Spottiswoode’s to send me the *Chronicle* every week, will you? and tell me about your cricket whenever you can find time for a line.

Your affectionate Uncle

H. B. F.

LXXXIV

From Mrs. Lely.

ST. JAMES' COURT.

DEAR GEORGE,

You will be surprised to hear from me, and I would not write to you, only I happened to see Miss Ambrose in the courtyard the other day and I went across to speak to her. She told me that she had been ill and was just going down to the country, and she certainly looked very pale and miserable. She did not want to speak to me at first, but as I felt that perhaps I could put an end to a stupid misunderstanding, I put my pride in my pocket, and insisted on talking about you! It required an effort because I am still a little sore about the way you behaved, and the fair Miss Lettice was not at all inclined to be friendly. However we parted very good friends, I'm thankful to say; and I am just writing this to tell you that if you will take the advice of a woman who is old enough

to be your Mother—(you didn't realize that, I suppose?) you will write to Miss A. at once and ask her to forgive you. Say anything horrid about me that you like, but *don't* say I told you to write. You see, I have still a warm corner in my *motherly* heart for you though you *did* treat me so badly.

Yours very sincerely

NIGELLA LELY.

LXXXV

From his Mother.

ILTYD BASTION.

MY DARLING SON,

This is a most lovely old house with a perfect dream of a garden and *two* ghosts, one of them an ancestor of Colonel Troupe's who puts his hand on your face while you are asleep and it has only got three fingers. I'm in the new wing, thank goodness, but I have a night light always, and Thompson sleeps next door. They have a cricket week every year and Colonel Troupe wants *you*—it's the first week in August. They are delightful people, and heaps of dogs and motors. Colonel Troupe knows your Uncle Harcourt. He has stayed at Conderwood and Lady Ambrose is a cousin of his. Isn't the world small? Your letter reached me safely, though it was addressed all wrong, you careless boy. How splendid making all those runs! But you must be careful not to catch a chill; the weather is still very cold. Put

on a coat or sweater *the moment* you get out. It's dreadful the way you spend money, and I am only sending you £1. Try and make it last. I will motor down on Thursday. Mrs. Troupe wants me to stay here till then and perhaps we shall motor over together and I can go on to town by train. But how are we to see you if you are playing cricket?

Your loving

MOTHER.

P.S. Such a bit of luck, my dear. I asked Colonel Troupe just now if he knew of any Scotch places, and he said at once why not take *our* lodge? Six bedrooms; 1,500 acres of rough shooting, and when they go up to the big house end of August you would get some ripping good shoots with them too: there's a salmon river too, I believe. It's somewhere in Inverness and all sounds delightful. Glenlea is the name. We'll talk it over on Thursday and settle about it then.

Loving

M.

LXXXVI

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

I was witness of a curious little scene this morning, which is worth describing to you. Lettice brought her two cousins down to pay me a visit, and I watched them from the lawn as they came down the ride through the wood, stopping to pick wild flowers and collect the three cocker spaniel pups that they were taking for a walk. Each was responsible for a puppy: Elsie Henrickson for Job, Madge for Barabbas—I hear you suggested this name—and Lettice for your Archibald: they were a great nuisance to Ben who is too old for the frolics which were expected of him; and Peter has spent the afternoon raking the flower-beds and tying up broken plants. But the three girls were charming, so friendly and unaffected and easily interested; and even Madge who was almost shyer than your account had led me to expect, thawed

when she got into the library, though I'm afraid she found my taste in literature shockingly frivolous. I can imagine that she was gauche and unsatisfactory at Sonchaud, where the romping Elsie would be a great favourite ; but when she becomes animated as she did over the *Liber Studiorum*, she looks pretty and, *I* thought, interesting. But neither of them has quite the distinction of Lettice. I sent the boy on his bicycle to fetch my letters and any that there might be for Conderwood ; and when he brought them lo and behold there was one for Lettice in *your* handwriting. I was in rather a quandary because I couldn't pretend not to have seen it, and Lettice was evidently not expecting it, and in fact she told me the other day that she hadn't heard from you for over three weeks. However I contrived to give it to her and to leave her in the library while I showed the other girls over the house. If you could have seen her when we came back again ! The change in her whole bearing was extraordinary, at least to eyes that were looking for a change ; and I found time for a quick word or two as I walked the girls through the garden on their way home. I said ' I hope you have good news of George,'

and she glanced at me sideways with that quizzing look that goes with a little puckering of the eyes and the faintest lift of the eyebrows. 'There's not much that escapes you,' she said evasively; but I was curious to know more. 'And you are happier?' I ventured. She turned and called the puppy who was loitering. 'I'm always happier when I've been to see you,' she said, now frankly laughing at me. 'And you won't tell me?' I pleaded. 'Yes, I will—when I come to confession,' was all she would promise and she took care not to leave Elsie's side till I had said goodbye at the fence and was hobbling back alone.

There's a little picture for you, George, a vignette to supplement the letter which I daresay she is writing to you at this moment. Probably you will not approve of my inquisitiveness; and indeed I feel rather like a boy who must look into a bird box every day to see how many eggs there are; but I take a very parental interest in anything that concerns you and Lettice, and I decline to be snubbed. It was right for you to take the first step towards a reconciliation—and high time too; the girl was ill with anxiety and remorse and yet too proud to tell you so.

From this you may learn an important lesson which will be valuable to you all through your life ; which is that it is never worth while to put a woman in the wrong. You will never convince them that they *are* wrong, and they won't like you any the better for the attempt. In this instance Lettice was willing to confess to me the other day that she had been abrupt and hasty in her treatment of you, (and it was apparently, Mrs. Lely herself who convinced her of this ;) but, if I know anything of feminine temperament she does not *really* believe it of herself and will not be grateful if you insist on her admitting it. Personally I think *you* behaved abominably, and I hope you ate humble pie with both hands in your letter this morning.

More tomorrow : it is just post-time.

Yours affectionate Uncle

H. B. F.

LXXXVII

From Miss Lettice Ambrose.

CONDERWOOD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

I was glad to hear from you this morning, because I was afraid that you were never going to write or speak to me again, and that we should never be friends any more. You say, have I been as unhappy as you have? I have been a great deal more unhappy, more than I can ever tell you or anyone else. *You* have not been unhappy at all; you may persuade yourself you have been, but it isn't true. Nothing has happened to make you unhappy, except perhaps that your pride has been wounded. You are too young to feel disappointments for long. I am younger than you in age, but after what I have been through I am much older than you in experience. I know now what sort of treatment women must expect from the men that they love; they must expect to be deceived right and left, and then asked to go on loving just as if nothing had happened. Well, I shan't make a fool of myself

like that again. Elsie Henrickson has been treated just the same by Graham Shooter; but she never gave herself away as much as I did, so she hasn't so much to complain of.

I must tell you all this, George, and perhaps you won't treat *the next girl* in the same way. You are selfish: your Mother has spoiled you all your life and done everything in her power to make things easy for you. She was kind to me simply because you wanted a girl to play with; she went out to Sonchaud for your sake, and hated it. Small thanks she has got from you; you are sweet and kind to her as long as things go right, but the moment anything goes wrong you blame her and not yourself. Do you suppose she has enjoyed your holidays? She has been extra good to me lately and begged me to make friends again with you, because it would please you. It was not easy for me to refuse, because I am devoted to her; but it would have been wrong to let you down gently as if every whim of yours was to be gratified at the expense of your Mother and me. I *will* not be infatuated like your Mother and your Uncle.

There, that is what I wanted to tell you: *someone* had got to say it, and now that I've 'got it off my chest,' I am quite prepared

to be friends with you again if you wish it. I have so few real friends that I can't afford to lose one. At present Elsie and Madge Henrickson are staying here and my Aunt too; and Father and Mother are coming down tomorrow. The puppies are all well and *Archibald* has never given me any cause for complaint, unlike his master! We took them down to Low Orchard this morning. Madge was much impressed with your Uncle: she is so very *studious*. Your letter arrived while we were there and your Uncle noticed it. He was very nice to me, but wanted to know too much. When I am with him or your Mother I feel that they tolerate me for your sake; and it isn't at all a nice feeling.

I *must* tell you what Mrs. Lely said about you though I'm afraid it is very mischievous of me. I met her at St. James' Court one day, and she evidently wanted to be friendly. She said 'All Eton boys are the same; they want to be treated as if they are in sailor suits while they are still in their prams.'

One for *you*, my boy!

I must stop now. Elsie is making a dreadful row on the piano, and wants me to play duets with her.

Yours affly

LETTICE AMBROSE.

LXXXVIII

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

I have just heard from your Mother that she enjoyed her visit to you on Thursday and that you are playing for the School today. I hope the scores will be in my *Observer* to-morrow, as I shall be impatient to hear what you have done. I've been imagining you all this afternoon playing in Upper Club—I suppose you *are* playing there and not in Agar's Plough? How many matches have I watched from under the elms, which can now only muster a few cripples instead of the fine array of forty years ago. I was never tired of lying there in the long grass while your Father was playing; and can never forget the dreadful day when he tripped over the path and cut his hands so badly, a fortnight before Lords. I must bestir myself, and make a pilgrimage to see you playing one half holiday; but it

must be in Upper Club; I am too sentimental to take any interest in the wretched prairie beyond. I love the immemorial turf, the undulations of the ground, the old unostentatious pavilion, the glimpse of Poet's Walk, and the green company of elm trees that are near enough to the wicket to be reached by a good slogger. I suppose *you*, being a scientific cricketer, prefer the prairie and enjoy sending the ball spinning over the yellow perspectiveless billiard-table to Slough or Datchet. But it will be many years before Agar's Plough has the dignity of traditions such as make Upper Club so dear to us veteran onlookers.

Jack is waiting to take this to the post, so I must stop. Write and tell me about the match.

Your affectionate Uncle,

H. B. F.

P.S. Sunday. Missed the post yesterday and I open my letter in order to answer yours which came this morning. I am amused rather than surprised to hear that you have had what you graphically describe as a 'snorter' from Lettice. There was something in her eye when she was here the other

day which led me to surmise that you were not going to have a walk-over, and that was why I wrote to tell how *really* delighted she was to hear from you again. I respect her a good deal for keeping her end up instead of meekly submitting to a follow-on. But you need have no apprehensions; the game is yours if you don't throw away your wickets. I confidently look forward to a resumption of the status quo ante—(if you can translate *that*). But I advise you to take a second helping of humble pie; it will not interfere with your digestion.

Yes, I know the Troupes slightly and I should think you would enjoy the cricket-week there. Mrs. T knows how to do things well, and has had a houseful of sons for about twenty years. Two were killed in South Africa and one wounded; there's one in India, another, I think, in Mauritius, and the youngest I saw gazetted to the Flying Corps the other day. So you see she is schooled to be a mother of heroes, a hard discipline for a mother who has only one daughter to fill the gaps. If you can draw the Colonel out he tells an excellent yarn.

I think your Mother was wise to settle on taking the lodge at Glenlea: it saves an

infinity of bother, and you are sure to get some good shooting, while she will have Mrs. Troupe always within reach. I wonder how you will like the daughter. She and one of her brothers stayed at Conderwood about two years ago, and I have a vivid memory of seeing her sitting on a rabbit-hole while Lettice sat on another and the Troupe boy smoked furiously into a third to disturb a ferret that was lying up. I expected to see one or the other of the girls leap into the air with a shriek at any moment; but the ferret appeared blinking at an entirely different hole.

War scares in the *Observer* as usual, and no mention of your match, which is very tantalizing for me. You would have thought that a paper which is always forecasting the next Waterloo would pay attention to the playing fields of Eton.

This is a longer P.S. than any that your Tutor has ever given you, I'll be bound! But I've shirked chapel this morning, and it's pleasant writing by the open windows, especially to you.

H. B. F.

LXXXIX

From Miss Ambrose.

CONDERWOOD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

Don't be foolish. If I were not fond of you I should not bother to write at all, or to tell you your faults. But *how* fond I am of you is another matter and my own affair. I have got to go back to London on Wednesday with Mother and Father, worse luck ; it is so lovely down here at this time of year, but as they took the flat chiefly for my benefit I suppose I ought to go up and bore myself with dances and the opera and all that. Isn't it funny that people are always in the wrong place ? Elsie would give anything to have a season in town, and I would give anything to spend the spring at her house on the river. It must be glorious there today. She and Madge are off with Aunt Jane this afternoon, and I shall be lonely. I shall have to talk to Archibald. Play up

hard at your cricket and when you have time
write a line to

Yours affly

LETTICE A.

but *don't* write quite such a silly letter
another time.

XC

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

What you say about your Tutor is rather interesting because you evidently resent what you consider his apathy. For three evenings running he has been to your room without mentioning your cricket, and you are as angry as your Mother would be if she met an old friend of the family who did not ask after *you*. Cricket means as much to you just now, as you have always meant to your Mother. You have been playing well; any success that you have will bring credit to the house; and yet your housemaster seems to avoid all reference to the subject deliberately. He must know that you played for the school last Saturday. Why doesn't he talk about it? You see, of course, the difference between his position and mine; and you must not jump to the conclusion that because he is reticent and I am garrulous,

he is necessarily a humbug and I am not. I told you the other day that schoolmasters have to be humbugs up to a point, and it is a point very much in advance of that to which everybody who lives in a civilized community has to be one. But it does not follow that he is the greater humbug in this particular instance. How do you know that I really care about your cricket? I may be simply 'playing up to you,' just as I might write reams of nonsense to you about trigonometry if that happened to be your hobby, or I might pretend to be enthusiastic about horse-racing or the ECOTC or different makes of motor-car. As it happens, I do not have to torture myself into an interest in your cricket; but I certainly should make an effort even if I disliked it as much as I do hockey. I am interested in everything that you do; but I have a quite independent and private affection for cricket which I should preserve even if you were a wet-bob.

Probably it has often struck you that house-masters must find it difficult to hold the balance between work and play. It must be difficult for them not to feel that it is better for the house to have the Captain of the Boats than the Newcastle Scholar in it; that

the tone of the house, the discipline, the good-fellowship, the cheerfulness will be higher with four members of Pop than four members of Sixth Form. You ask yourself, 'Which of us is the more useful to my Tutor, De Bluhn or I?' Yet you see your Tutor apparently going out of his way to encourage De B. and to ignore you. That is an exaggeration; it is truer to say that he will not allow himself to show more interest in athletic than in intellectual events. A decent copy of verses is as creditable to the individual and to the house as a decent score. Such is the attitude of your Tutor; and in his effort to be just to De Bluhn, he is less than just to you. I know that he is really keen on everything that you do, and after what you say in your letter I can't help wondering whether George has not been putting on a trace of *side* this half, or behaving boorishly in pupil room, or treating his Tutor in a slightly off-hand way, or wearing outrageous waistcoats and buttonholes and socks. Has he?

You see the point, George? I'm sure you do. When you were up at Oxford the other day you were surprised to find that Hepplewhite talked eagerly about boxing and about everything except work; but I can assure

you that he would have talked—not so eagerly perhaps, but with more interest—about Sanskrit if he had found that you could respond. I enjoy writing letters to you about your cricket; but I should enjoy much more writing letters to you about Elia. And who is *she*? Never *you* mind. Get on with your cricket.

Your affectionate Uncle

H. B. F.

XCI

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

You are too cute; and how on earth do you find time to read my letters and to answer them? Your comment on my last is very shrewd: but I expressed myself badly. I've been turning the thing over in my mind while I was out in the woods this morning, and I determined to put your question to myself in another way and to ask, 'Why is it better to make Latin verses than runs?' The question is very shadowy and incomplete, and so must the answer be. But both go down to the bed-rock of life. You know that a man can get along very well without being able to write Latin verses; he can get along equally well without being able to play cricket. Neither accomplishment by itself would be of any real use in an emergency. The only excuse for playing cricket or learning to write verses is that they fit you more or less to take your

place in the world and to keep *it*: 'more or less,' because a great deal depends upon your temperament. I take an old-fashioned view about these matters and I say that we ought to educate our children with the main object that they may hold their own when they are 'up against the world.' Whatever else life may be, it is a fight; and you will not find many people to deny that the man who wins in a fight is the man who is best adapted to the conditions under which the fight takes place. Education is the process of conscious adaptation. So far as we know the probable conditions of the fight we can prepare for them. For instance if you are going into a definite profession—the navy, the army, the law, the church, the city, and so on—your education may be directed with a special view to the conditions under which you will have to fight. If you are going into the church, a knowledge of Maclear will be better than a knowledge of electricity: if you are going into the city skill at golf will be better than skill at Latin verses. It would be ridiculous if they educated you all at Eton as if you were going to be shop-keepers or the boys in a grammar-school as if they

were going to be proconsuls or large landowners. Take your own case. It has generally been assumed that you will eventually go into the city: you are being educated so that you would probably make a pleasant secretary for a golf club. Supposing your Father had said 'George is going to be a Member of Parliament; he shall be taught history and geography, political science and economy: he shall study social conditions, and languages; he shall learn how to write and to speak like a statesman. Educate him on these lines, please.' There would be something straightforward and sensible about this. But what would be the result? There would have to be special divisions at Eton or special schools even, for boys who are going to be M.P.'s: you would grow up together, and by the time that you were of age you would be so heartily sick of politics and of the others who were to be on your side or against you all your life, that you would decline to go on with the business at all, and you would be stranded: just as very many men who have had a scholarship education and have no private means at all find that they are only fitted to become clergymen or schoolmasters. I

disapprove of the whole of this system, and I say 'Teach every boy how to develop his own powers in every direction, how to take a lively interest in everything, how to be equal to any emergency.' That old ideal, 'to know something about everything, and everything about something,' is too much of an epigram to be reasonable: but it is better than the present reality, 'to know nothing about anything,' or rather the reality which was despotic in *my* time. Now things are better, but till learning by book alone is abolished no great progress will be made. Practice and theory must go on side by side.

It is fatally easy to talk about these things; but this I know that if I had a son of my own I would bring him up so that he should, to the best of my power, be impervious to the 'chances and changes of this mortal life,' keen and self-reliant, swift to adapt himself to new conditions which I cannot foresee. And I would wish you to be the same. If only I had known you better and earlier!

I shall write to you again about this whether you read it or not. For the present adieu.

Your affectionate Uncle

H. B. F.

XCII

From his Mother.

NETHERLAND

COSWAY.

MY DEAREST SON, .

I am a bad Mother not to write to you oftener, but I am always thinking of you and generally talking about you and besides I never could write letters and the things that I do wouldn't interest you much, and you have got your Uncle Harcourt who writes enough for the whole family. I love getting letters from you: don't stop writing them because I don't answer *each* one. Of course I will come down for the Fourth of June if you really want me, but I shall have to start back in time to dress for dinner as I am going to the Russian Ballet that evening. Would you like me to bring anyone with me? What about Lettice? I haven't seen or heard anything of her and you don't mention her; so I suppose you have not made it up yet. Never mind; you

are much too busy in the summer half to bother about girls. I can't realize that it is your last half and that I shan't have anybody to go and see at Eton in future. But I daresay I shall get just as fond of Oxford. You see I am staying with your Godfather this week and he has been catechising me about you and last night in the hall after dinner he made me feel so uncomfortable about you that I couldn't play bridge afterwards and had to go to bed. He says it is no use being educated as a gentleman nowadays; you ought to be educated as a man. I don't quite know what it means, but it was something to do with democracy. He thinks Eton boys are namby-pamby and 'soft.' I told him all about you and he said, 'Well then he must be a very wonderful animal or else you are his Mother.' Wasn't that silly? But I like him very much. He wants to see you, so perhaps you will go there next winter and get a shoot. His own sons are funny creatures, and I don't want you to be like them; they all had to go and work for their living in factories or some such place, and they have not got such good manners as old Sir Humphrey.

Let me know, dear, about the Fourth. I

go back to town tomorrow. Would you like me to ask the Raeburns? They are jolly girls but I think their brothers are at Harrow. So many quite nice people seem to send their boys there nowadays.

Your loving and devoted

MOTHER.

XCIII

From Miss Ambrose.

ST. JAMES' COURT.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

I don't think I will come down to Eton for the Fourth, even if your Mother will chaperone me. Father wants to go down for the Winchester match, and I expect Mother will come too; so perhaps I shall see you then, but I don't much want to go to Eton twice. I am going to stay with the Henricksons at Warland for Henley, which will be rather fun. Will you be there, do you think? They have got a motor-boat, so I *might* see you. I wish you would not go on grousing and being silly. It doesn't make me respect you any more.

Yours affly

LETTICE A.

No, I am not engaged yet!

XCIV

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

It is delightful of you to ask me down, and I accept the invitation with alacrity. But not for the Fourth! You know my horror of these functions. I think I would prefer the Free Forester match which I see is in the following week. There will be good cricket, a few old friends, and no crowd. You will be busy playing of course, but I'll stay late and perhaps your Tutor will let you come out to dinner with me, and I will sleep in London. It will be a great treat for me, and already I am thinking about little else, though I shall hate having to watch the match on Agar's Plough. Presumably you will have your Mother to look after on the Fourth—and Lettice? I have heard nothing of her since she went back to town and I rather miss the chance of meeting her in the village or of looking up from my chair to see her coming down through the orchard. I

am delighted to see that Speeches are to be in Upper School and not in School Hall—a name which still sticks rather on my tongue. Probably you care little enough where they are, though, if you are wise, you will go to the dress-rehearsal. I wish you could have taken part in them. It is the greatest pity that boys of your position in the school are not taught how to read aloud and declaim and stand up without fidgetting before an audience. Debating societies are some good, but your faults of gesture or diction are not corrected. It may be a minor accomplishment to be able to make a neat after-dinner speech or to read the lessons in church with intelligence, or to tell an anecdote so as to get the full flavour out of it; but these minor accomplishments are extremely valuable in after-life, and are easily acquired if you have a good teacher.

I was discussing education at Eton last night with my neighbour Mr. Dethick, he maintaining that it was a lie and sham from beginning to end and I casting about for arguments in defence of it; and he reminded me of a good quotation from Lecky, to the effect that ‘one of the great differences between childhood and manhood is that we

come to like our work more than our play.' It is a truth which I have often tried to urge upon you lately because you are in the transition stage and you are surprised and a little shocked to find yourself interested in all sorts of new subjects about which only saps are supposed to know anything. The transition will take time; while you are at Oxford you will probably sap at your games and play at your work, and even when you first go to the city, if you ever *do* go there, you will treat business hours much as you have been taught to treat school hours. But if you have got any grit and honesty of purpose you will soon find that the business of life is more absorbing than the leisure; and if you grow to love your work, whatever it is, very deeply and to regard 'play' as a tiresome arrangement for keeping you fit and well, then people will call you narrow-minded and groovey! To be absorbed in anything, to see it grow under your hand whether it is a business or a picture, and not to rest until it is perfect, which is the same as saying never to rest at all, that is to be in a sphere where there is no distinction between amateurs and professionals. The amateur does a thing because he loves it;

but the proper man loves a thing because he does it.

This was the point at which Dethick and I joined issue while Ben stirred in his basket, glanced at the clock and wished to goodness that Dethick would go home and leave him in peace. Dethick says he has never chosen a profession because he does not *like* any of them. Life is short, he says; why do anything that you do not like doing? My retort is that there is only one thing in this world that a man can never be happy in doing permanently, and that is nothing; with everything else familiarity breeds affection. *You* probably enjoy 'staying out' when you are really perfectly well. But how soon you grow bored by idleness! Dethick quoted the 'Apology for Idlers,' and I maintained that it was an apology for truancy and that Stevenson never meant it to be taken seriously, any more than Jim Stephen did his verses about Early School—which you know. Dethick finally got up out of his chair, stretched himself and said that I was 'depressingly Occidental'; and then went to bed. So will I now.

Your affectionate Uncle

H. B. F.

XCV

From his Mother.

SOUTH STREET.

MY DEAREST BOY,

It is all right, as you will have known from my wire. I took the trouble to go and call on the Ambroses and persuaded Lettice to come with me tomorrow. She is a queer girl but she was looking *very* pretty indeed. *Raymond* was there to tea! I *was* surprised. He says he will probably motor down tomorrow afternoon in what he calls his biscuit box; so we'll all have tea together at Rowlands or in your room, just whichever *you* like.

loving

MOTHER.

Mrs. *Lely* introduced him to her, at the Opera!

XCVI

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

I can't help a sneaking sort of wish that I was going to be at Eton tomorrow, in spite of the crowd and the heat and the dusty gravel of the path to Sheep's Bridge and the kaleidoscope of semi-familiar faces. The coming of the railway to Slough killed Montem, and the swarming of motor-cars has ruined the Fourth; but if Montem was still in existence a good many of us would like to go to Salt Hill in spite of the railway, and I daresay if one was in the mood one could still enjoy the Fourth. I believe I *am* in the mood! I have a hankering for a glimpse of Eton before anyone has arrived, when the water-carts have just been along and everybody is busy putting on white waist-coats and new suits; and the new hat stands on the table, and there are flowers on the mantelpiece and the smell of white daisies

and mignonette and geraniums from the window box mixes with the fragrance of the sprinkled roads; and there is just time to run down to the slab and fetch up paper bags with strawberries and chocolate and short-bread, 'and I don't know what all' as Sarah says; and the burry is tidied and the table has perhaps a new cloth; there are no books on it, or only the last *Chronicle* and the new 'ephemeral' paper which you bought at Spottiswoode's after chapel: and now it is time to go to the station to meet your people, and to stop on the way and curse them at Little Brown's or Rowland's for not having sent up the Genoa cake you ordered. My imagination is probably committing the most horrible solecisms, and anyhow the dressing-up part of the Fourth doesn't appeal to swells like you; it is the lower boys to whom the whole day from chapel to bed-time is a succession of proud excitements. I think too of the grave cool interior of Upper School during Speeches; of the ceaseless circulation of faces round Upper Club, sunshades, tophats, straw-hats, bobbing up and down or floating serenely on the stream; of the salmon and trifle and claret-cup and strawberry mess at your tutor's luncheon;

of the cabs jolting over South Meadow to the river-side; of the fireworks, which I'm told are noisier and more elaborate every year; and of the silence an hour later, when a thousand tired boys are asleep and a thousand white waistcoats glimmer in the darkness.

I hope your Mother may see you make a big score. Meanwhile I shall be sitting in the garden, reading, while Peter cuts the hay in the orchard, if the weather holds as fair as it promises. My love to your Mother.

Your affectionate Uncle

H. B. F.

XCVII

From his cousin Raymond.

BUFFALOES CLUB.

DEAR BOY,

I had the deuce of a job to get back to town. Was it drink, or fireworks, or love? Went well as far as Hounslow; the old Biscuit Box ripping along as if she thought she was going back to Reading and rattling emptily to attract Huntley and Palmer to the bedroom window. When—Lawks—a hefty great cart ten yards in front. Biff! off came a wheel and down came the cart, depositing upon the road about two tons of vegetables and two sleepy rustics. Shades of Covent Garden! My front axle was bent: rustics inclined to be hasty of speech; but no rear-lamp and on wrong side of road, so no excuse: gave them the dear old B. B's number, my address, and a pair of silver coins—having wisely given you my last piece of gold, lucky George—and crawled on towards London, expecting a final *débâcle* every yard,

and didn't get home till three. Sir met a gal, as the French say ; I'm glad I stopped for the fireworks and saw that merry fellow swamp the boat. That was a very tough knock of yours, too, quite a treat for the dear girls. I suppose you're a cert. for your Eleven now. More glory to the family.

I say, what about the Ambrosial One? Your preserves? Just give me a hint, will you? I couldn't quite see how the wind blew.

Yours

RAYMOND.

XCVIII

From Miss Ambrose.

ST. JAMES' COURT.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

I never thanked you properly for my jolly day at Eton ; but we saw so little of you that it was hard to get a word in edge-wise, and somehow when we were driving up to the station I forgot to say all the proper things ! But the tea in your room was delicious and Mr. Raymond looked after us and was so amusing. He ragged me because you had got my photograph up, but he did it so nicely I didn't mind. Still I wish you had been there too. I felt very proud when you came and sat with us after your innings and everybody stared at you. But there was no chance of *talking*, was there ? in such a crowd. I wish I could have stopped for the fireworks with you and Mr. Raymond, but perhaps I should have spoilt your fun. He rang me up this morning to say that he had an accident with that

dreadful old car of his, coming back last night. I expect I shall hear all about it this afternoon, because I am going to tea with your friend Mrs. Lely, and he is sure to be there. Mrs. L was lunching in the restaurant today, and she came and talked to me, and I introduced her to Mother, and she asked us to tea, but Mother couldn't go because she has a meeting on, but she said I might go alone. I am rather wondering what it will be like. Mother says she has 'such a sad face'! I must go and change my dress now. I suppose you know that you were rather standoffish yesterday? Or didn't you mean it?

Yours affly

LETTICE.

XCIX

From his Mother.

SOUTH STREET.

MY DEAREST BOY,

I will do what I can but as you know Lettice is rather wilful and it is no use telling her not to do a thing. Her Mother is a dear simple old body who would never see through anyone. I am asking them both to luncheon tomorrow and will see how the land lies. But I must say that it strikes me as rather funny *you* wanting me to interfere; but of course you know the lady better than I do. I shouldn't worry about Raymond if I were you, and I should get out of the habit of thinking that Lettice can't look after herself.

Everybody was talking about your innings the other day and I was a very proud Mother. I didn't tell you that your Tutor spoke *very nicely* about you, and said that you were 'waking up intellectually' (can't spell); is it Uncle Harcourt's influence?

Don't get too clever or I shan't be able to cope with you !

Your loving and devoted

MOTHER.

P.S. How dreadful Eric looked ! I was so sorry for Lady de Bluhn but she didn't seem to notice anything.

C

From his cousin Raymond.

BUFFALOES CLUB.

DEAR GEORGE,

Don't be an ass.

Yours,

RAYMOND.

CI

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

Many thanks for your letter. It is good of you to say that I shall be welcome on Thursday, and I will make arrangements to get to *Slough*—observe my malice—in time for the first over, and will sleep the night in town. Will you please tell your Tutor that I shall hope to take a luncheon off him—you will be feeding in the Pavilion, presumably. I have written to Mrs. Stevens to bespeak a table in her back garden for dinner where we can eat roast chicken and discuss the important things about which you want my opinion. What *can* they be? I am *intrigué*. Anyhow I shall enjoy talking about them, whatever they are. It is, as your Mother says, my hobby.

Mrs. Hatherleigh was round here this morning and wanted to know whether I thought I could lure you down here to stay with me and to play for them in their cricket week—second week in August.

There is a good chance that her son will be playing for Winchester against you; you haven't met him, have you? I don't know what you will make of the idea, but if you would care to come here and play they are sure to be a good set of fellows and yet you wouldn't have the need to stay in a house full of Wykehamists. I should love to have you here, naturally, and can't help hoping that the suggestion will commend itself to you. But we'll discuss the matter further when we meet. The Hatherleighs can't put up a whole Eleven, so they want to billet a few boys on neighbours: no doubt some will stay at Conderwood.

Your affectionate Uncle

H. B. F.

By the way here is another bit from a book written by an Eton Master. 'How often too does a false notion of decorum, or even a want of easy good nature, prevent my giving due credit to a bit of successful construing, or a happy answer to a hard question. If we cheered those who play our bowling in school well, as heartily as we cheer our batsmen at Lord's, I think there would be a little more zeal amongst our young students.' What do *you* think?

CII

From Miss Ambrose.

ST. JAMES' COURT.

DEAR GEORGE,

I wish to goodness I hadn't ever told you I was going to tea with Mrs. Lely. Raymond tells me that you wrote him a ridiculous letter about it; and yesterday when Mother and I went to lunch with *your* Mother we had hardly sat down before I found that they were discussing Mrs. L. I asked your Mother point-blank whether you had written to her about her and she said yes, you were worried because you didn't think she was a good influence for me. Now look here, George, I should be angry if I were not amused. If you want to find fault with anything I do, write to me and say so. I consider it great cheek for a boy like you to write to other people about what I am or am not to do. I shall choose my own friends without consulting you; and it is especially absurd for you to

try and dictate to me after the way you behaved last holidays, you have forfeited any *right* to do so. You may be an important person in your school, but you aren't running the *whole* world yet. Raymond has *also* told me about your night out the last day of the holidays, which you were *very* careful not to mention. I don't profess to be a saint, but I am not a hypocrite; and you had better give up laying down the law for other people till you have an excuse. I don't know what you said to Raymond in your letter but he evidently thinks that you and me are engaged or something. I soon put him straight about that.

Don't be an idiot, George dear. Be sensible. We could be such very good friends if only you didn't ask too much of me: and after all that has happened it would be a thousand pities if we quarrelled. If you will promise to be good I don't mind confessing that I didn't enjoy my tea with Mrs. Lely one little bit, and I don't want to go again: and I think it was rather dear of you to fuss about it like that, though it *was* awful cheek.

Yours affly

LETTICE.

CIII

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

The train took me away from Eton all too soon. I should like to spend a fortnight there in the summer half, if every day of it could be so enjoyable as Thursday was: but you would be intolerably bored if you had to entertain such an old crock as I am, and without you I hardly think that I should care for it at all. The boys alarm me; there are so many of them; their kindly critical eyes disconcert me, and I should only dare to walk about in the streets when they are in school—or rather to stop in the street and enjoy a view or a glimpse of some beautiful and familiar corner—if it were not for your powerful protection. I liked to see you so much in control, everywhere we went, so completely and nonchalantly *Pop*; but I would not venture to tell you this unless I

were sure that your self-assurance would never develope into 'side'; nor would I tell you, if I did not feel that perhaps I seemed rather donnish and unappreciative at the time. If I did, I am sorry; it is one of my most objectionable habits, and I remember your Mother, years and years ago when she was engaged to your Father, telling me that she disliked my habit of 'looking down my nose' whenever she spoke! So if I looked down my nose occasionally during our evening together, I apologize herewith, and admit that it was priggish of me. But you said some rather startling things, you know; and I was suffering from a long dose of your Tutor. He was kindness itself when he took me up to that ultima Thule in his car and found me a chair and told me who all the players were; and perhaps it was my hatred of Agar's Plough which made me find his company a trifle irksome. I am willing to believe that when your grandson is my age he will enjoy watching his nephew playing cricket there; but as far as I am concerned I want Upper Club or nothing. I think I told you how sorry I was not to see you make more runs; but I forgot to tell you how much I enjoyed watching you *fielding*.

You are a wonderfully good fielding side, but I see no reason why *you* should not establish yourself as the finest fieldsman of the eleven. Some of Bewdley's drives that you stopped were far too quick for me with my field-glasses. Make up your mind and concentrate on your fielding. That is what tells at Lord's; however good your batting may be, you may fail in both innings, but you can always retrieve a slip in fielding. However it is absurd of me to pretend that I was not perfectly content as long as I had my glasses fixed on the game and had your Tutor's staccato comments to assist my ignorance. I have an idea that he is one of the best men that ever lived; that was how he impressed me on Thursday—His absorption in his work, though not unusual by any means in the better class of schoolmaster, is combined with a great sanity of thought as well as a very high ideal to which he aspires. Such a lot of nonsense is talked about Eton and the other great public schools that it is quite time someone took up the cudgels for them and belaboured those presumptuous folk who rush into print in order to explain to the world that their amazing stupidity is due to the way they were educated. It is very

possible that your generation will do greater things than mine is doing, but it is ridiculous to suggest that because the methods by which we were educated would be antiquated if they still held the field, therefore you and your contemporaries are being badly educated: the truth being, I suppose, that Eton is very different from what it was even twenty years ago, and has been affected by the national resurrection after the South African *fasco* like everything else. However you probably don't know the volleys of criticism which your teachers have to face with all the courage and patience and perseverance at their command; but you ought to realize, if you don't, that you and your friends are entrusted with a very precious thing—your Tutors' *faith*. They are judged by their works, and you are one of your Tutor's works! Supposing you had a retriever which you had trained yourself and on which, as they say, you had pinned your faith; and supposing you sent it to some Trials and, although you imagined it to be excellently trained, it ran in on every possible occasion, you know how ashamed you would feel. A good Tutor has something of the same pride and anxiety and

faith as regards his pupils: *your* Tutor especially, though he is too reserved a man to let you see him pinning his faith on to you.

And the point of all this? Only that I was surprised to find how well your Tutor knew your character; and afterwards when you and I were dining in that dear little garden with the cat I couldn't help being anxious now and then with a fear that you were subtly changed and were becoming worldly and flippant. Of course you are *not* changed: it was simply that your Tutor's conversation had made me peculiarly sensitive, and I noticed your occasional flippancy and petulance as if they were new and abnormal. *Don't* worry about yourself or what I have said. Concentrate your attention on cricket and work, your work being anything that you are interested in besides cricket.

There are several things that I want to write to you about, things that I had no time to say on Thursday; but they must keep till tomorrow. Mrs. Hatherleigh is delighted to hear that you are coming for the cricket week. I lunched with your Mother at the flat yesterday and managed

to call on Lady Ambrose on my way to the station. They are at Conderwood for the week-end, I believe.

Your affectionate Uncle

H. B. F.

CIV

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

I had no time to write before our absurd Sunday post went out yesterday, because Lettice brought a young married couple to see me after luncheon, and I had been blue-doming all the morning instead of writing letters. Consequently I got your prompt and unexpected answer to my last this morning before having written a still more mystifying epistle to you. You were puzzled by my references to your Tutor. Did I really say that he bored me? It was very wrong of me if I did: and I shan't forgive myself for having been so ungrateful, unless *he* confided to you that *I* was a dreadful nuisance. Anyhow I think it is better for us not to spend our time vivisectioning your Tutor, especially while you are in his charge: there is more than a suspicion of disloyalty about it. Nor did I mean to

accuse you of worldliness or flippancy. Not that I should be much alarmed if you were both worldly and flippant. It is not a good thing to be choked by the cares of the world—which I suppose are high collars and stiff shirts; but everyone who lives in this world ought to be worldly, or else they would do better to shuffle out of it at once. If you are in business it is well to be business-like; but there is no need to be grasping and over-reaching and heartless. Unworldly people have to have private incomes or else to sponge on their worldly relations. That is flippant, no doubt you will say. Very well, I retract it. Flippancy comes from one of two things, inexperience or disillusionment. The former is not very reprehensible, the latter is ghastly. The same might be said of profanity.

But I won't give you another dose of my platitudes. Evidently the last bewildered you.

As I told you, Lettice came here yesterday afternoon with some people who were staying at Conderwood; and as I also had a flying visit from Raymond who of course gave me no warning, except one long barking cough as he turned the corner of the

drive in his very disreputable motor-car, I had quite a tea-party under the cedar. The four of them played croquet afterwards, and Lettice had a lesson in driving the egregious car, apparently without mishap, though the rasping of the clutch was horrible to hear. By the way you were rather reticent about her the other day, and I have had no chance of asking her about you. What is the news?

Your affectionate Uncle

H. B. F.

CV

From Miss Ambrose.

ST. JAMES' COURT.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

We are coming down for the *second* day of the Winchester match, or the *Eton* match, as father calls it, and Madge and Elsie Henrickson are going to meet us at Eton and I am going back to Warland Court with them for Henley: so would you mind ordering *five* chairs for us, as you said you would? It is awfully good of you and I hope it is no bother: with the sun at our backs, please, if there is going to be any sun! I hope we shall see you make a heap of runs. I hope Eton will win, in spite of Father being Winchester. If you have any spare time mind you come and see us. We went home last Saturday and I saw your uncle on Sunday afternoon. The pups are all right but getting very grown-up. The Hatherleighs are going to have a cricket-week—a great excitement. Harold is play-

ing for Winchester, as you probably know. We have got to put up three boys here, and I hope they will be nice ones. But all Winchester boys are nice, aren't they?

Till we meet, then!

Yours affly.

LETTICE.

CVI

From his cousin Raymond.

BUFFALOES CLUB.

DEAR OLD GEORGE,

'Ow are ye? Not still humpy, I hope. If its fine on Sunday I've promised to take Dinkey Somers to Maidenhead for a lounge on the river, and the dear girl has expressed a desire to see where the Guardsmen come from on our way home. Would you be about the place say between seven and eight? She would love to see you and your room, and we'd only stay five minutes and I wouldn't let her smoke within the precincts of your domain. What say you?

Yours

RAYMOND.

CVII

From his Mother.

SOUTH STREET.

DEAREST SON,

Forgive me for not writing oftener, but I *am* so busy. I think it is best not to come to Eton too much this half; it only unsettles you, and besides you are always playing cricket. Anyhow I couldn't manage next Friday or Saturday as I have promised to go to Sandown and stay with the Morrisises for the meeting. I don't think I can manage Henley either: there is always such a glare and the people get commoner every year. But of course if you *really* want me I'll go and meet you. I daresay I could get tickets for Phyllis Court. It is all fixed up about Glenlea and I have signed the lease. I shall go north about the tenth and get things ready for you and you will come as soon as your cricket weeks are over. Who shall we ask to stay with us? Any of your friends that you like or that you owe any hospitality

to: but remember it's only rough shooting. We ought to get some girls too. Lettice? or are you rather off her at present? I think it is all right about the box for Lord's, but I haven't heard for certain.

Bless you. Your loving and devoted

MOTHER.

CVIII

From his cousin Raymond.

BUFFALOES CLUB.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

There's no need to apologise. I thought you might like to meet her, that's all. My mistake.

Yours

RAYMOND.

CIX

From Miss Ambrose.

ST. JAMES' COURT.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

In case you don't have time to come and talk to us tomorrow this is to say that Mrs. Henrickson has written to tell me to ask anyone I like to lunch at Henley any day ; so I hope you will come. Let me know which day, and where we can meet. I'm not sure yet where the lunch is, but it's some club or other. Perhaps we could meet near the boom opposite the winning-post : that is what Father suggests. I see from the paper he has just brought in that you are doing pretty well today ; '23 not'—well done : keep some of it for tomorrow, please. Remind me to pay you for the chairs : it was good of you to take so much trouble and I'm sure they will be all right. What fun you coming to the Hatherleigh's cricket-week ! No the Troupes

haven't asked me to Iltyd Bastion. I must try to work an invitation.

à demain,

Yours affly.

LETTICE.

We shall lunch at the Stoke Poges Golf Club tomorrow.

CX

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

It must have been a capital finish, and your first innings certainly contributed to make it so. *Of course* you think you weren't out in the second! Who ever did? But a firstclass umpire hardly ever makes a mistake about l.b.w. I see you caught two men out, one of them our friend Hatherleigh, but you don't mention in your letter whether they were good catches or not. I'm glad Dethick came up and spoke to you. He certainly is excellent fun, and that drooping eye-lid of his always gives him the look of being humorous even when he is most serious. You would do well to follow up the acquaintance. What a restless time this is for you! Everything but games must go to the wall till after Lord's, and I daresay it is a very good thing. At this time of year lessons are an abomination. I think it would be a

good thing if there were only two holidays, at midsummer and midwinter, say four weeks at Christmas and the whole of June, July and August. You will enjoy the Long Vacation when you get to Oxford : but of course then you will do most of your work in the vacations ; the terms are just for getting your work mapped out and looked over, as it were.

I hope the Eight will be up to expectations tomorrow. Henley used to be a charming festival, but it has lost some of its 'picnic' aspect, by all accounts, and the dwindling line of house-boats means less colour and life. Write to me again when you have time and tell me what they say about our prospects at Lord's. Certainly I shall be there ! I hardly ever miss one or other day of the match ; and this year nothing shall keep me away.

Yours affectionately

H. B. F.

CXI

From his Mother.

SOUTH STREET.

MY DEAREST SON,

I enclose a cheque for £3. I quite understand that you have a great many extra expenses, but you must try to make this last. I had *shocking* bad luck at Sandown though I enjoyed it very much otherwise, only I wished after all I was at Eton and could have seen you making all those runs. You should have told me the date earlier. I am glad that Eton won the Ladies Plate at Henley: is it *given* by ladies or what? Now about Lord's. Certainly ask the Henrickson girls to *any* meals you like. I couldn't get the box after all, but I've got seats from your Uncle Harcourt, and a table for luncheon and tea both days. Lady de Bluhn has asked me to go to her coach, so I shall be alright if the seats aren't good. I don't think you can ask the Henricksons and *not* Lettice. Ask them all three to dine with us at the White

City on the Saturday. I'll get a table in that club there. Are there any boys you would like to ask? I'll get Raymond anyhow. Don't ask those boys that led you into all that mischief last holidays, but anyone else you like. My dear boy, I am *so* looking forward to having you here again, and I pray that you may make *lots* of runs. How your Father would have loved to see you playing for Eton!

It is getting very hot in town and I shall be thankful to go right away into the country; but I must stop in the south till after Goodwood, worse luck. I am longing for Scotland. It does seem a shame that one should be so tied by engagements when one is sick of them. It becomes more of a tyranny every year. Bless you.

Your loving and devoted

MOTHER.

CXII

From Miss Elsie Henrickson.

WARLAND COURT.

DEAR GEORGE,

How very kind of your Mother! Of course we should love to join her party for the White City on Saturday night. It will be a great treat for us country mice and we can stay with an aunt of mine for the night. Mother is writing to arrange about it. We shall come up early on Saturday and go to Lord's to see you play. I suppose we can get in alright without tickets? and we should love to have lunch with your Mother. How shall we find her? I expect my Aunt will want to go with us, though Madge is really quite a good enough chaperone for me and I am for her! Didn't you think so at Henley the other day? I *did* enjoy it all. I shall never forget it. Lettice went yesterday.

Let me know where we'll find your Mother on Saturday.

Yours etc.

ELSIE HENRICKSON.

CXIII

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

You tempt me greatly; but I know the limits that my wretched body puts to my activities: and by the time the stumps are drawn and the crowd is demonstrating in front of the pavilion next Saturday I shall be thoroughly fagged out and glad to creep back to my shell here. I should only be a dismal wet blanket at your gay dinner-party, though I should dearly love to see you and the other young people indulging in the strenuous delights of the White City. It is *very* kind of you to ask me and I thoroughly appreciate the kindness. But I must refuse, as much for your sake as for my own. Your Mother has asked me to dine with you at the flat on Friday night, and I shall enjoy talking over the events of the day with you. May there be great deeds to discuss!

In your queer laconic letter you affect an indifference which I'm sure you are far

from feeling: or else you are stale, which is a serious matter. People of your age have no business to be doubting whether it is worth while playing cricket. Such bilious doubts are dangerous on the eve of Lord's. I can safely say that you will not regret hereafter the time you have spent in becoming proficient and in proving your proficiency even in a game like cricket. It supplies an outlet for many ambitions, much energy, and the sharpening of many faculties: and though I hope you will never become a regular county cricketer, I hope you will be able to use your cricket-sharpened faculties in other directions. As you know I am a great believer in elasticity and adaptability of mind and body. I believe that a proper man should be able to cope with anything and to do without anything; that he should never be a slave to anything or anybody, his habits, his passions, his prejudices, his affections; never listless, never bewildered, never beaten; cheerful, sensitive, self-reliant and generous. Adaptability to environment, I mean. Now, almost more than ever, we have to be prepared for unforeseen emergencies. You come across men who are miserable if they have no tobacco or no golf-links within reach: men

who get ill if they don't have eight hours' sleep, or the amount of exercise to which they are accustomed; who are uncomfortable if they have no tooth brush, or others who are equally uncomfortable if they have to wear London clothes. I frankly confess that I am the worst of the lot; there are certain things that I should miss dreadfully if I lost them, and there are many possible situations in which I should be completely nonplussed. But I try to school myself to a species of adaptability which is called fortitude: 'give us courage and gaiety and the quiet mind,' wrote Stevenson in one of his family prayers: and it is not to be doubted that mental elasticity is more valuable than bodily. It is not much good to practise hopping in case you may break your leg a mile from home; but it is worth while to make sure that you can bear pain and keep a clear head. You need have no doubt that your cricket has taught you many things which you will be very glad to have learned some day.

But I am hardly adapting myself to your mood! I shall be in the pavilion on Friday morning in time to wish you good luck when you go out to bat or to field.

Your affectionate Uncle

H. B. F.

CXIV

From his Mother.

SOUTH STREET.

MY DEAREST SON,

I have done my best and have been sending wires all day. I have arranged to chaperone the Henrickson girls and am sending them the tickets. If they bore me I shall desert them and go to Lady de Bluhn's coach! Lettice is fixed up: her people will look after her. I don't know how many people I have asked to meals—hundreds! It's an excellent way of returning hospitality. Your Uncle Harcourt is dining here Friday night. I have got a table at the Garden Club for Saturday at 8; and there will be Lettice, 2 Henricksons, Gladys Hatherleigh, Betty Troupe, Bob Troupe (rather dull, but I had to ask him), Raymond, your friend Grinling, you and I; and if you can get another boy, that will make eleven: and on Sunday we will motor the Henricksons home and go on to Maidenhead or anywhere you like. Is that all right? I am so excited, my darling: and shall be the proudest mother in the world.

Your loving and devoted

MOTHER.

CXV

From Miss Elsie Henrickson.

WARLAND COURT.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

I must sit down at once and write and tell you what a heavenly time we had, although you've only gone about an hour ago! I'm writing to your Mother too to thank her for being so sweet to us, and for letting Mr. Shooter join her party; but we owe it all to you and we are *very grateful*. I have never seen Madge enjoy anything half so much, and she really was quite gay at the White City, wasn't she? Evidently that queer-looking Captain Troupe drew her out! I am so glad about it, because she makes very few friends. I believe she enjoyed meeting your Uncle at lunch on Saturday too, and she is always talking about his library. I don't know why I tell you all this except that I want to show that we *both* enjoyed ourselves enormously. As for me I enjoy everything: but I must say that from the moment when

we first got on the ground yesterday and saw you fielding, to the end of the last sett of tennis this afternoon it has all been perfectly ripping. I hardly slept a wink last night, but I'm going to to-night I promise you ! I have been making Mother die with laughing over the way we ragged the Witching Waves last night. Well, I must stop now. With a *thousand* thanks for everything.

Yours ever

ELSIE HENRICKSON.

CXVI

From Mr. P. Gurton Richards, M.P.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

DEAR FITZ GRANNET,

Probably you will never have heard of me ; but I knew your Father very well, and remember seeing you once at Strahan when you were a small boy in kilts ! I was talking to your Father about you a few months before he died and we were discussing our old cricketing days, and I said to him, ‘ If your boy plays for Eton at Lords ever I’ll give him a shilling for every run he makes.’ So now I have much pleasure in fulfilling that promise, and enclose a cheque for 47s. I’m sorry to say that I missed your first innings, but I was able to get to Lords on Saturday and enjoyed every stroke of your excellent 29. It was a fine finish, and I could not help wishing all the time that your Father could have seen you. You have inherited his mastery of the cut, which is so much out of fashion in these days.

I hope that we may renew our acquaintance before long. Please give my kind regards to your Mother when you next write to her.

Yours sincerely

PHILIP GURTON RICHARDS.

CXVII

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

I should have written before, but have been paying the price for my dissipation, and am only downstairs this morning for the first time. What a very delightful surprise Mr. Richards' letter must have been. I know little about him except that I believe he has only made one speech in the House of Commons and that was about betting at Newmarket. He votes straight, rides straight to hounds and talks as straight as a party man dares. He has forestalled me in commemorating your successes; but fear of seeming to copy him shall not prevent me from sending the enclosed which is meant to signalise not your runs but those two most opportune catches, and your fielding in general. It was a joy to the eye, and I am looking forward to the Hatherleighs' cricket week for another exhibition of your

alertness and energy. The Ambroses are back at Conderwood, so Peter tells me, and no doubt Lettice will be strolling down here one of these fine days. But I fancy that you do not take such a keen interest in her doings as you did ; which is a pity. I glean from your letter and from what your Mother told me that your centre of levity has moved from her to her cousins : and to one of your age and temper probably the younger sister, who is a bit of a rogue, is more attractive than the elder, whose quieter manner appeals to me. Does the reshuffling of the pack—or at least of the hearts—leave Lettice to pair with the irrelevant Raymond ? I hope not, but they seemed to be patrolling Lords together most of the time.

It turned out on Saturday much as I had told you on Friday night ; but I confess that I had not foreseen quite such a close finish. They made a plucky recovery. The annual demonstration afterwards seemed to me to lack sincerity ; but I daresay that is not altogether to be deplored. Several immaculate hats were sacrificed on the altar of patriotism, and I stayed so long watching the *mêlée* that I could only get a hansom to take me to Waterloo. I had a talk in the

Pavilion with your Tutor, and was glad to find how keenly he appreciated your performances. Probably he will not permit himself to say much to you on the subject, but you need not mind ; he is far from insensible of the credit that you have done to the house. It's a pity that you did not get through the first round of the house-cup ; but no doubt a short rest from cricket will be a pleasant interlude before your two strenuous cricket weeks at Iltyd Bastion and here. Your Mother still lingers on in town, a martyr to the social machine, though her heart, she has told me, is in the Highlands.

You will see that I am still in a morose mood, unfit for letter-writing. I shall be better when I have been out in the sunshine.

Your affectionate Uncle

H. B. F.

CXVIII

From his Mother.

MY DARLING BOY,

I'm glad that it is all over though it was certainly great fun, and you were a splendid success. I spent Monday in bed, recovering from my fatigues, but as long as I had you with me I did not feel tired. It was good of you to pay so much attention to your old Mother, when all those girls were tumbling over each other to get near you! But you have got a head on your shoulders, and I know you won't let it be turned by your popularity. I should be angry if people didn't adore you! Betty Troupe is the latest of your conquests. She came here on Monday morning with a bundle of the morning papers, and sat in my bed-room cutting out the accounts of the match which she says I must keep in an album! She is wildly excited about the cricket week and has bought an enormous scoring-book. Did you really mean that you wished I was going to stay at Iltyd

Bastion too? She implored me to go, but I have refused again. It seems to me that I should be in the way, and I really hate watching cricket, and I should only be worried by having so many rowdy young people round me. Betty evidently considers you as the property of Elsie Henrickson, and when I said something about Lettice she declared that that was all off and that Lettice was carrying on with Raymond. I can't believe this: she is such a nice-minded girl: but they certainly were always slipping away together the other evening, weren't they? I know *you* were anxious about them weeks ago, and I did try to put in a word with Lettice, but it's no use trying to warn girls nowadays. Dearest boy, I *really* don't think I can ask the Henricksons up to Glenlea. I daresay they would be with you most of the time, but still I should have them on my hands a great deal, and to tell you the truth, I don't take to them *very* much. I think the elder girl is dreadfully shy and unsympathetic, and Elsie is so rowdy. The way she went on with Graham Shooter at the White City! Of course she's very pretty, and I like you to have pretty friends; but they are both rather dowdy, and quite a different style to Lettice,

though she *is* their cousin. Arrange for Grinling to travel up with you on the 16th. He is delightful, I liked him very much, such good manners and he spoke nicely about you. He is just the sort of boy that I like you to bring and introduce to me as your friend—not like those common Prince's Gate people. I shall be staying with the Chappuis' at Lavant for Goodwood and shall go north on the third. I am very busy arranging about servants and food and so on. Will you want any more *clothes* for Scotland? If so, get them now and don't leave them to the last minute

Your loving
MOTHER.

CXIX

From Miss Ambrose.

CONDERWOOD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

Why didn't you say all that on Saturday? You had plenty of opportunities, but you were so much taken up with Elsie that you hardly spoke to me the whole evening. Do you realize that? I suppose I ought to say that I didn't care, but as a matter of fact it hurt very much because you must have known how much I wanted to talk to you about the match and about all your doings. Oddly enough I still take an interest in them! Why on earth you should studiously ignore me when we meet and should then claim any right to dictate to me who are to be my friends, I don't know; but as you seem to be so much worried about Raymond I may as well tell you that you needn't be. We are good friends, and *that is all*, and he is a most cheery companion when one is in the dumps.

I neither know nor care whether what you say about him is true ; but it is very probable that he will soon grow tired of amusing me and will flutter off to someone else. He has a large heart. I went down to Low Orchard yesterday ; your Uncle is still looking dreadfully done up after his time in London, but, as usual, he soothed me with his kindness. He has a wonderful way of understanding what you mean without your having to say it outright. He asked about Raymond too, so I suppose you have been writing to him about it. As you have given me such a lot of excellent advice I will give you a piece in return. Don't imagine that you are the only fish in Elsie's basket, *or the largest.*

Yours affly

LETTICE A.

P.S. Archibald is a great lump now. Will you take him to Scotland with you ? I can keep him till then, but Father keeps on saying that there are too many dogs about the place. I heard from Betty Troupe yesterday, asking me to their cricket-week. But I'm not sure I shall go unless you promise to be nice again.

CXX

From Miss Elsie Henrickson.

WARLAND COURT.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

Wish me joy! It will be in the *Morning Post* tomorrow, but I thought I must write and tell you myself. *I'm engaged to Graham Shooter!* It's lovely. I expect you guessed it, didn't you? I'm afraid I behaved very oddly that night at the White City, and I rather made you ask him; but it was all just coming on then and I was in such a jiggety state of nerves that I didn't know what I was saying or doing. You will understand some day, when your turn comes!! We aren't to be married till December, which is a bore; but we have arranged all about our honeymoon—Cairo first, then Cannes and then Sonchaud. Perhaps you'll be there! Anyhow you must come to the wedding and see me turned off. Graham is looking over my shoulder and he says I am *not* to write letters to anyone under *eighty*, and that I *am* to go on the river with him *this instant*. I must humour him *at first*.

Yours ever

ELSIE HENRICKSON.

CXXI

From his Mother.

SOUTH STREET.

MY DARLING SON,

So Elsie Henrickson is going to marry that nice Shooter boy! She has done well for herself, he'll be very rich some day. I suppose he is pleased with himself but I should be very disappointed if I was his Mother, and I expect she is. She hoped he would catch that Polkinghorn girl with the red tam o' shanter. Of course *I* am delighted. I was afraid you were getting fond of her, and was very uneasy about it: she is not nearly good enough for you. Now about tips and presents. I think you must certainly give your dame something, but it is difficult to think of anything that she would care for. Wouldn't it be best to leave it till you come to town next week and then we could go round to Asprey's and choose something together? Twelve pounds is a lot of money for tips; but I suppose everybody has been very attentive to you, and of course I want you to leave a good

impression behind you, and I know you are careful about money. I enclose a cheque. I am just off to Lavant for Goodwood this afternoon and Thompson is packing at this moment. I daren't leave her to do it alone, she is sure to make a muddle of it. I shall be back here on Tuesday, and ready for you on Wednesday. Will you be up in time for breakfast? I suppose you needn't go to Iltyd Bastion till late in the afternoon, so we shall have time for a good talk and you will be able to tell me everything that has happened. My dear boy, I hope you won't be very sad at leaving Eton. You must feel it, I know, because you have had such a splendid time and made such a mark for yourself; but you will enjoy Oxford just as much, and you will always be able to go back to Eton and see your friends. You have altered a good deal since the day I took you to your Tutor's first! Such a funny little boy you were, and could think of nothing but the pocket-knife your Father gave you before we started! Now you are a man. Bless you. May you always be the comfort and pride that you are now to

Your loving and devoted

MOTHER.

CXXII

From Miss Ambrose.

CONDERWOOD.

My dear, it's no use being angry with you any more; you are so good-tempered about it that you make me feel as if *I* had been unkind instead of *you*. We shall meet at the Troupe's on Thursday, and I refuse to have all my fun spoilt by you grumping or trying to make me jealous. Your Uncle says that I have been 'mischievous' and that I ought to write and tell you that I only encouraged Raymond in order to annoy you—though he *is* very amusing, whatever you may say. Now that I have admitted that perhaps *you* will admit that you only flirted with Elsie in order to annoy *me*: and I may as well tell you that *she* was leading *you* on simply in order to annoy Graham Shooter, and it had the desired effect! It seems as if in order to make a person fond of you you had to annoy them. But I don't like doing it!! and I'm not going to do it

any more and I'm going to forget all about these last few months and to behave just as if nothing had happened. Isn't that better, mon ami? Now, that I've made my confession, don't snub me, for goodness' sake. Are you looking forward to Thursday?

Still your loving

LETTICE.

CXXIII

From his Uncle.

LOW ORCHARD.

MY DEAR GEORGE,

I have been thinking a great deal about you this last week, and if I write what is in my mind my letter will as likely as not find you in an inappropriate mood: but as it is the last that I shall write to you as an Eton boy I must take the risk. Quite probably you are not much affected by the prospect of leaving; there are so many little things to be done, plans to be made, farewells to be taken, that the underlying considerations remain submerged. The mood which you describe in your letter has of course passed; a lazy day on the river generally affects an energetic person with melancholy even if it is not his last week at school; and though you will feel a twinge of partly artificial emotion at the 'last' Chapel, and the innumerable 'lasts,' you will not fully realize that you have left Eton for

some weeks or months. Probably I realize it more than you do! and that is why I want to tell you the few platitudes that have been in my mind lately.

This morning I was looking through the bundle of letters which you have written me from time to time during the last year, and was trying to recall my answers to them, and to trace the good or bad counsel that I had given you. What I *did* trace very clearly was your patience with my long epistles, and also the ingenuity with which you played up to me and led me to further extravagances of paper and ink. Was it that you took pity on my loneliness and my garrulity, or was it that you really cared to tell me things and to hear my comments? A little of both, I hope. At any rate *I* have enjoyed this year more than any of the last twenty; and I am conscious of the feeling which I believe affects a man when he becomes engaged to be married; he wishes heartily that he had *prepared* himself, and it seemed as if all the previous years ought to have been spent in this sole endeavour, to fit him for the woman he loves. Similarly I feel that I am extraordinarily unfit to help you; and I have been doubtful whether

I ought to profess higher standards than I myself follow or whether I ought to be perfectly frank with you and risk the chance of lowering the standards which you were painfully acquiring at Eton. I chose the latter alternative because I am one of those who believe that we ought not to attempt to teach others what we do not believe ourselves: and I have tried not so much to influence you for good as to encourage your confidences. The mere fact of talking or writing about things frankly makes them emerge into the sunlight and take their place in the ranks according to the standards which you have inherited or acquired. If through my influence you take a lower view of things than your Father did or your Tutor does, then you will have the right to curse me hereafter: but if through my influence you take a broader view of things and find the difference between what you feel and what you are apparently expected to feel less puzzling than you did a year ago, then I am justified. I am less of a rebel than I was at your age, but I am still capable of shocking respectable people profoundly, in perfect innocence. Your Father was different. From a boy he was

of that strong and serene temperament which carries a man without friction through the inconsistencies and turpitudes of life. He never went through the phases of revolt and doubt that made me unhappy; and his was a tolerance that was natural, and not acquired through the stress and buffetings of experience. When you came here last August, unless I am mistaken, you were in a state of bewilderment; you had just ceased to accept everything as it came, you were beginning to wonder why things were so blatantly discrepant. I remember one evening you told me, quite flippantly and ingenuously, 'When my Tutor comes round in the evening and I don't want to be bothered talking to him, I pretend to be saying my prayers'; and when you had said that you began to worry about it, and the next day you showed me what had been in your mind because you asked me whether I thought your Tutor ever remembered being a boy himself: and you said 'Sometimes he seems too good to be true,' which made me laugh; and you put the question to me, 'Does he *really* believe what boys say?' I think any decent-minded boy is worried by his conscience sometimes when he scores off his tutor; but you have

had some pretty bad twinges, haven't you? I hope I have made you see your Tutor in a more sympathetic light. You are no longer amazed by his credulity or appalled by his narrow-mindedness; and you have come to see that there is another aspect of the matter. There are two kinds of Tutors; those who wear carpet slippers and those who wear hob-nailed boots. And this I can say to you without any affectation at all, that you will be very lucky indeed if in the whole course of your life you come into close contact with a man of nobler and more unselfish and purer ideals than your Tutor; and there is one incontestable proof of his thorough goodness, that his old pupils always speak well of him.

That is one of the things that I wanted to say to you while it is on the top of my mind. The other thing that occurs to me is that in retrospect your Eton life will probably resolve itself into a conglomeration of escapades and lawlessnesses (what a word!) You will forget what you learnt, and the wise words that fell from masters' lips in school: you will remember incidents, rags, forbidden amusements, eccentricities of masters and so on. Memory is apt to

founder upon reefs ; but it will also go softly aground upon the sand-banks of particular scenes. Wherever you go you will never forget Eton itself, school yard and the cloisters, Chapel and the bell and the clock-chimes, the summer playing-fields, the river at Athens, the smell of sawdust at the fives courts, and a thousand other familiar sights and sounds that lie quietly near the surface of your consciousness.

You will take away tangible calculable things—these memories, some friendships, some knowledge ; but the cloud of intangible, incalculable things—one can hardly hint at them without injuring the wings of such delicate butterflies of emotion and habit and principle. Fearlessness, humility, perseverance, honesty, loving-kindness—how coarse the words are ! Leave them unuttered. Think rather of Eton as a mother blessing her children ; think of her in the sanctuary of her elms brooding through the centuries upon the greatness and fineness of human life, sending out daily, hourly into every nook and cranny of the world the million waves of her being.

In a day or two you will be off on your cricketing travels, and when you come here

on Monday week I suppose you will be resplendent in a Rambler tie. You are badly wanted here by

Your affectionate Uncle

H. B. F.

P.S. Will this go for a penny, like Mrs. Tanqueray's past ?

